Vol.15

ROKUDA NOBORU

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VOL.15

ABOUT TO EXPLODE

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ABOUT TO EXPLODE

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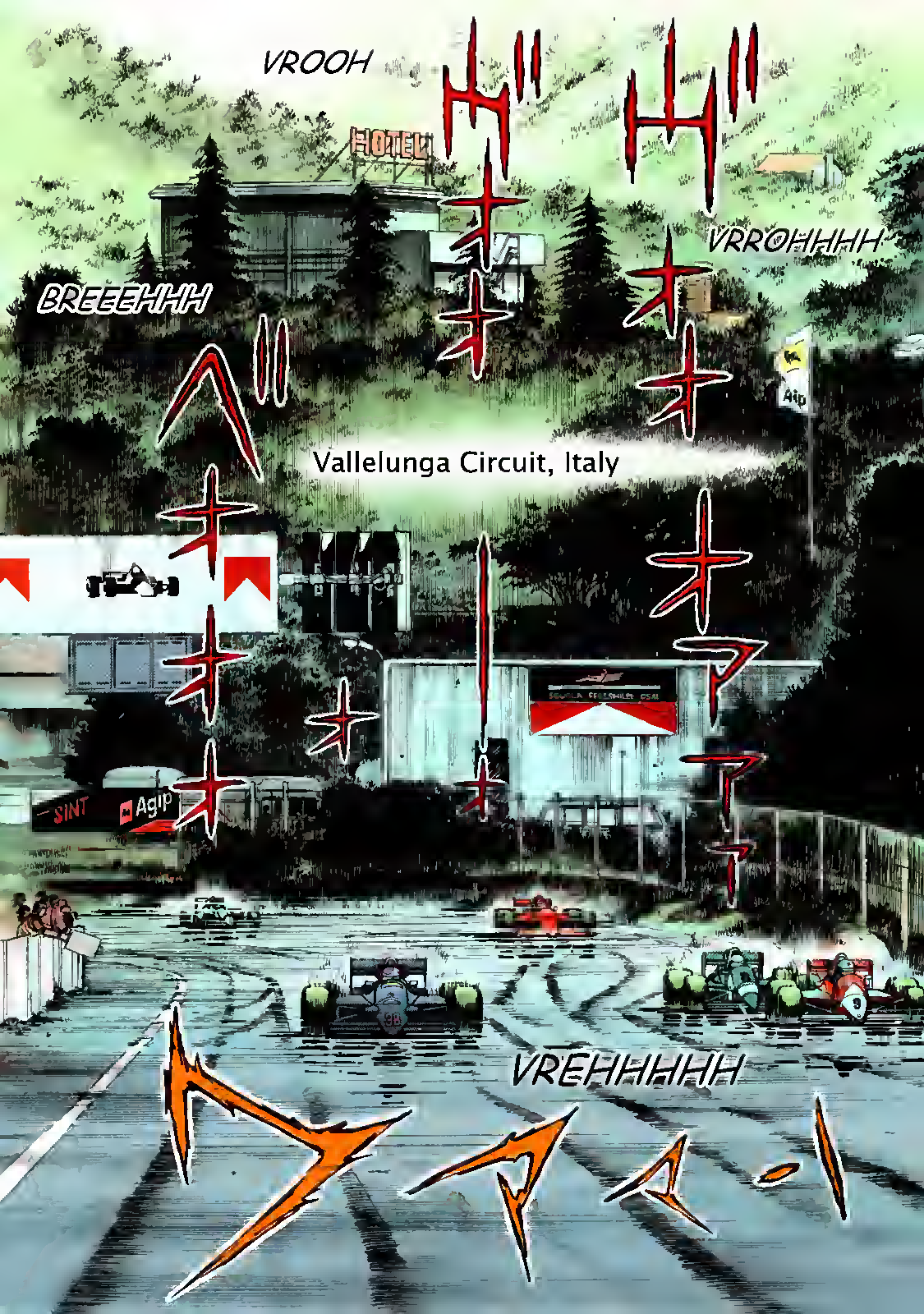
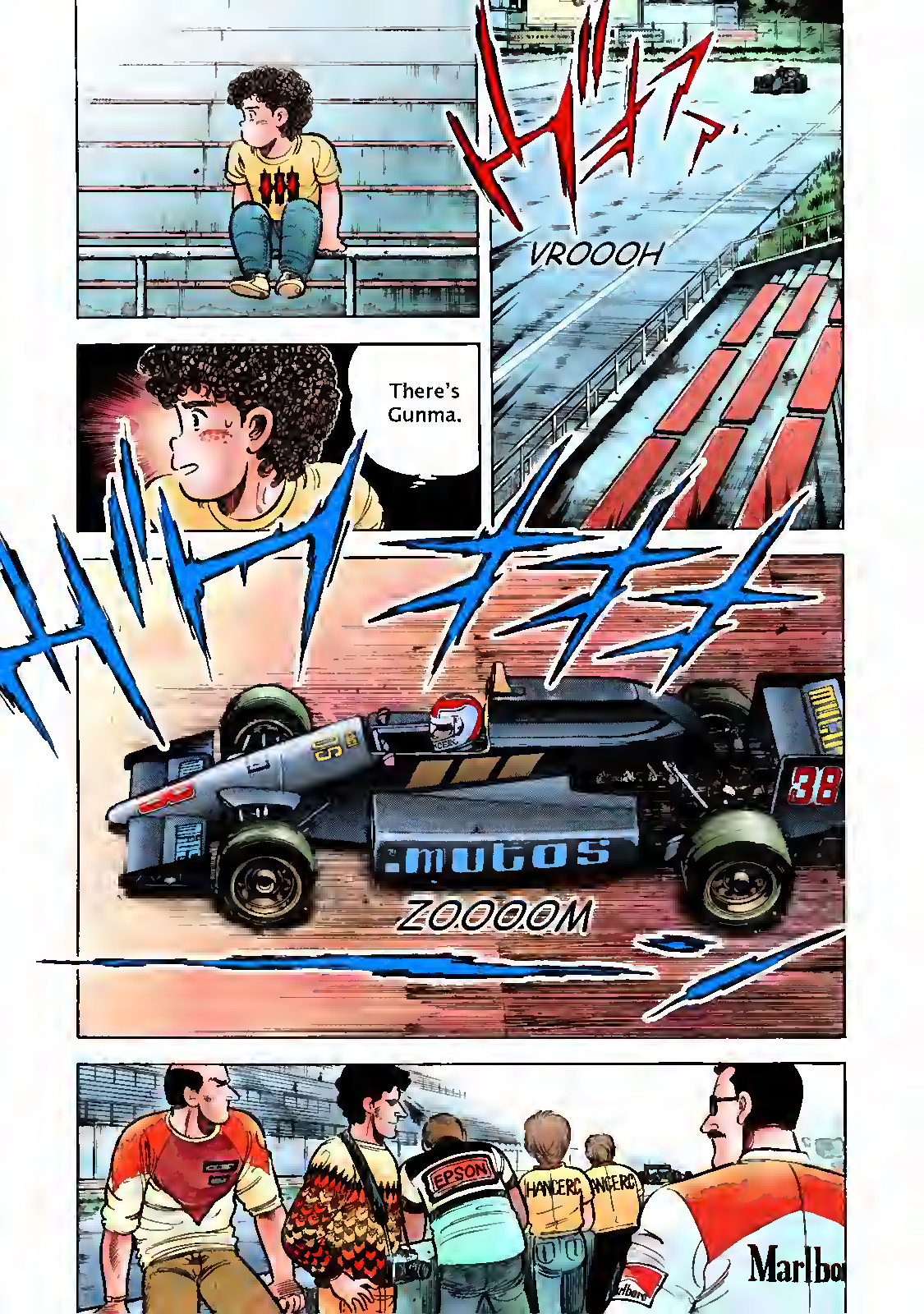
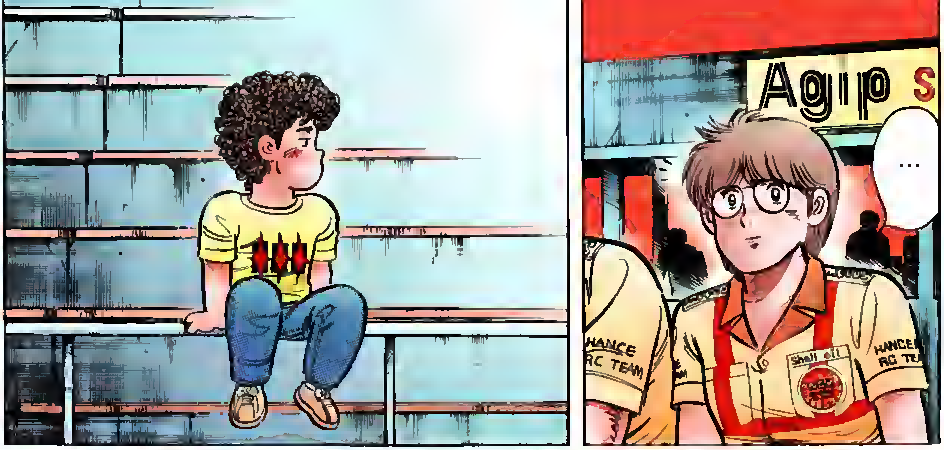
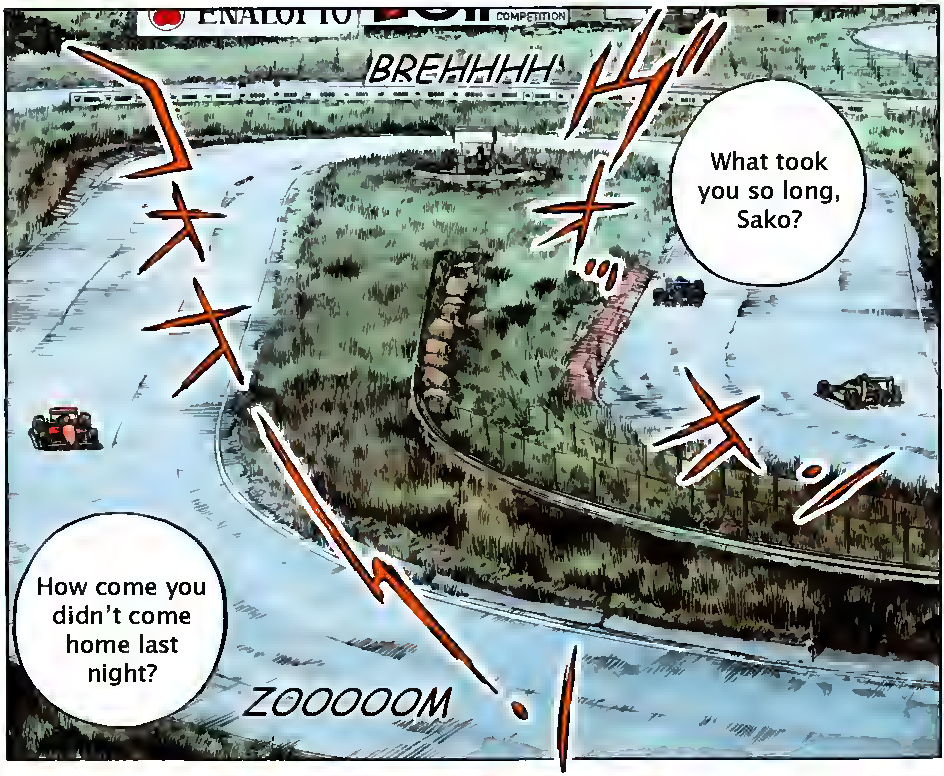
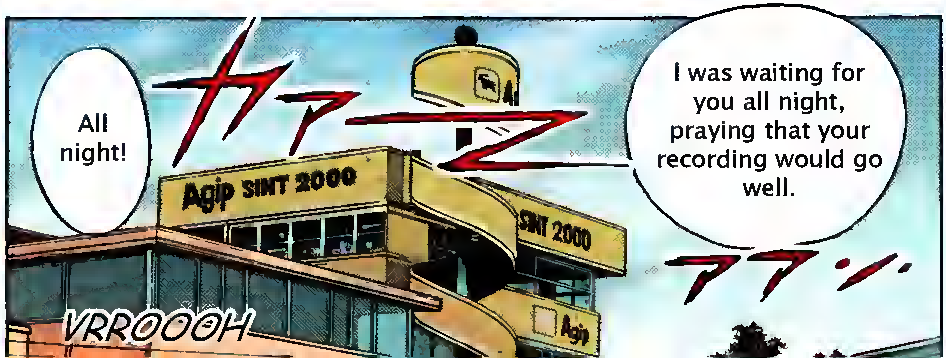
Chapter 1: Sudden Storm

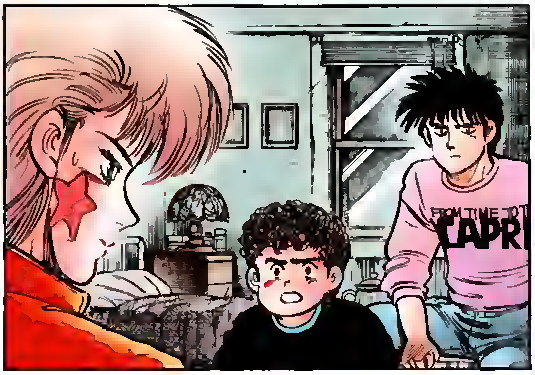

VROOH
HOTEL
VRROHHHH
BREEEHHH
Vallelunga Circuit, Italy
SINT
Agip
VREHHHHH

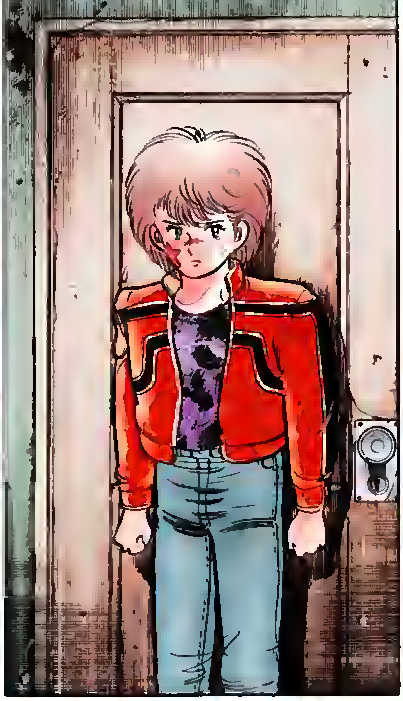

VROOOH
There's Gunma.
.mutos
38
ZOOOOM
EPSON
HANCERC
HANCERC
Marlbo

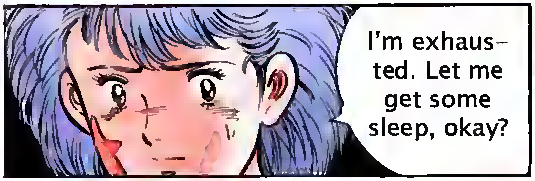

Agip S
...

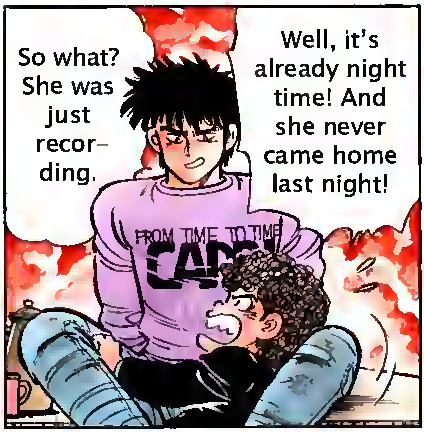

BREHHHHH
What took you so long, Sako?
How come you didn't come home last night?
ZOOOOOM


All night!
I was waiting for you all night, praying that your recording would go well.
Agip SINT 2000
SINT 2000
VRROOOH

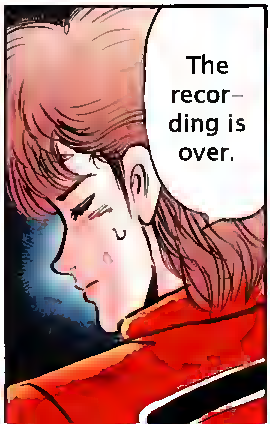


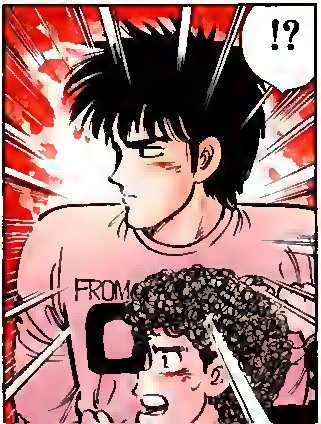


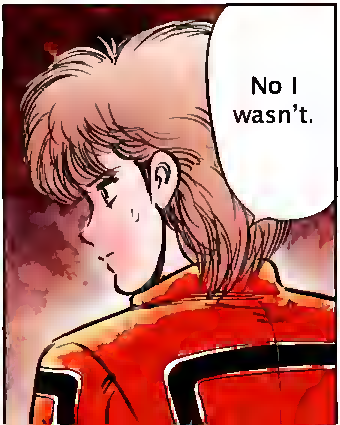

I'm exhaus-
ted. Let me
get some
sleep, okay?

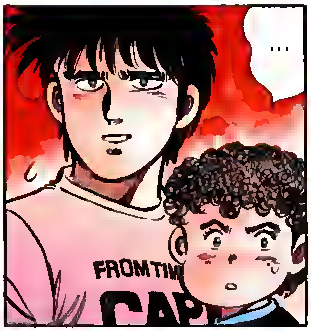

So what?
She was
just
recor-
ding.
Well, it's
already night
time! And
she never
came home
last night!

Pea-
bow.
No Sako!
We deserve to
know where you
were all night!


The
recor-
ding is
over.


!?


No I
wasn't.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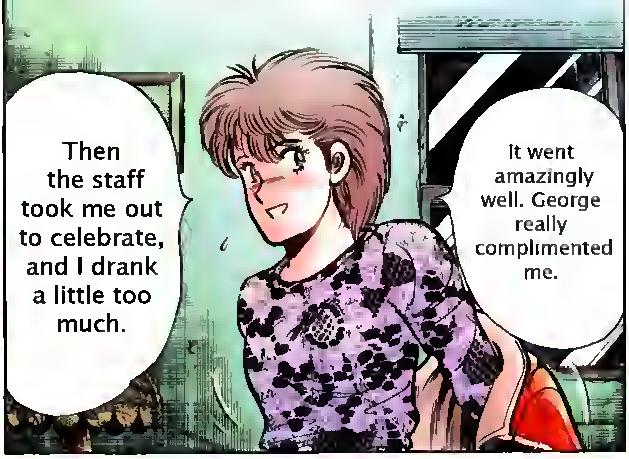
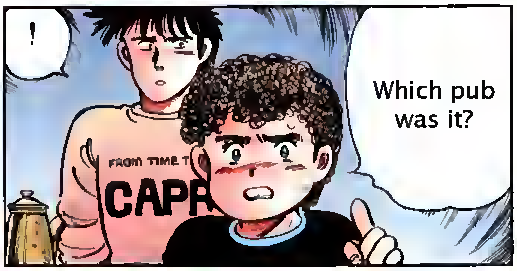
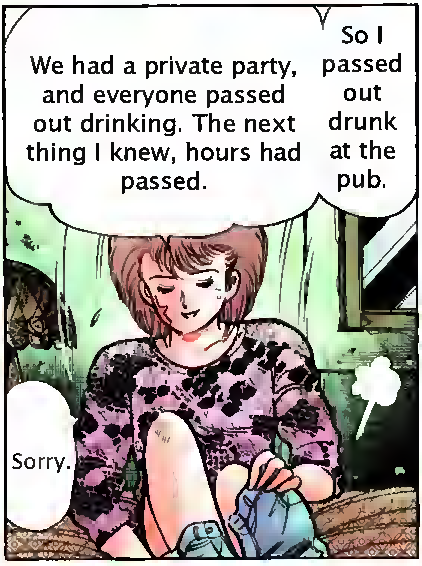
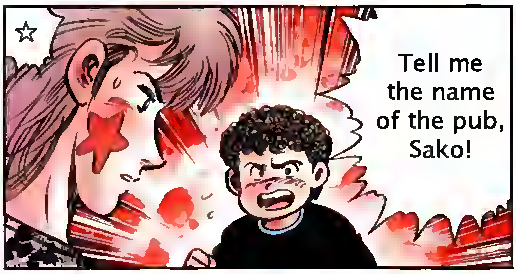

Then the staff took me out to celebrate, and I drank a little too much.
It went amazingly well. George really complimented me.


!
Which pub was it?

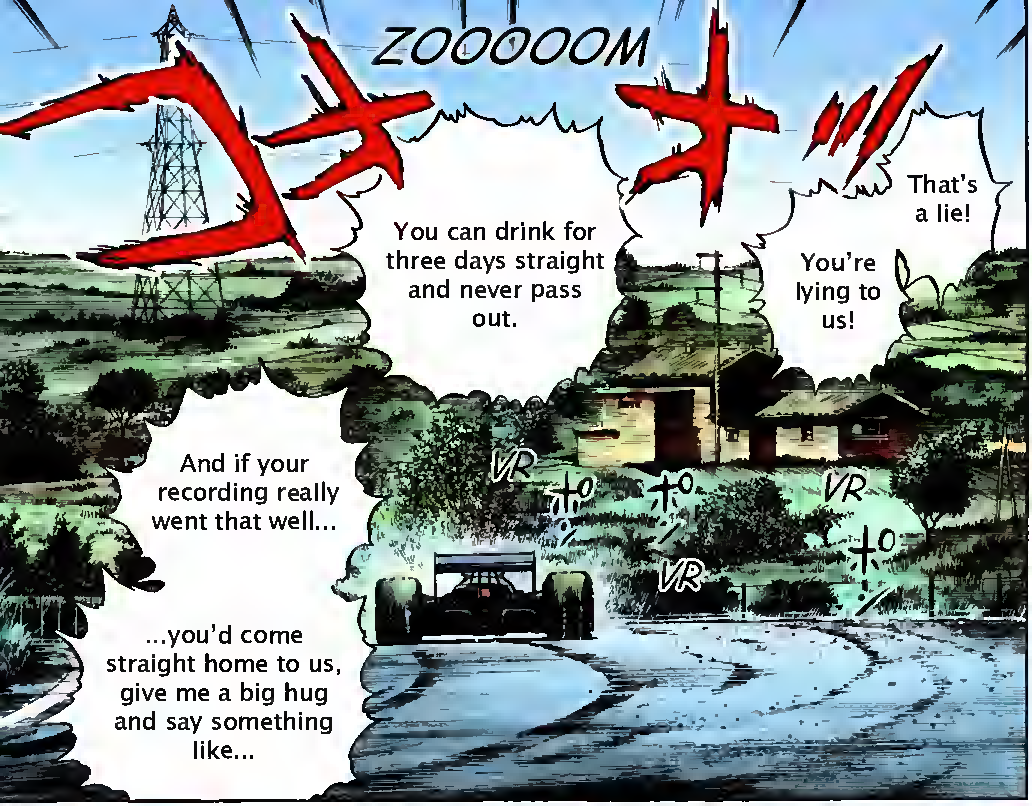

We had a private party, and everyone passed out drinking. The next thing I knew, hours had passed.
So I passed out drunk at the pub.
Sorry.


Tell me the name of the pub, Sako!

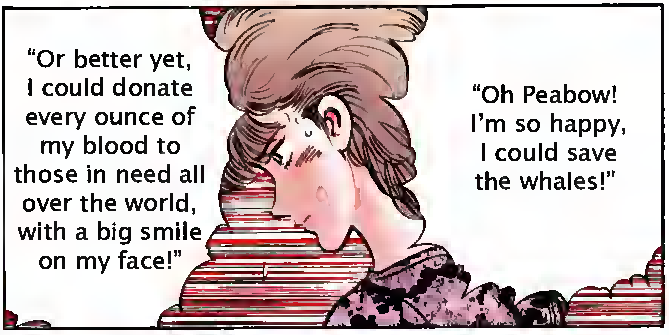
And nervous during the recording session.

Well... I did. I mean, I was so exhausted.
I don't believe you passed out drunk!

What is your problem, Peabow!?

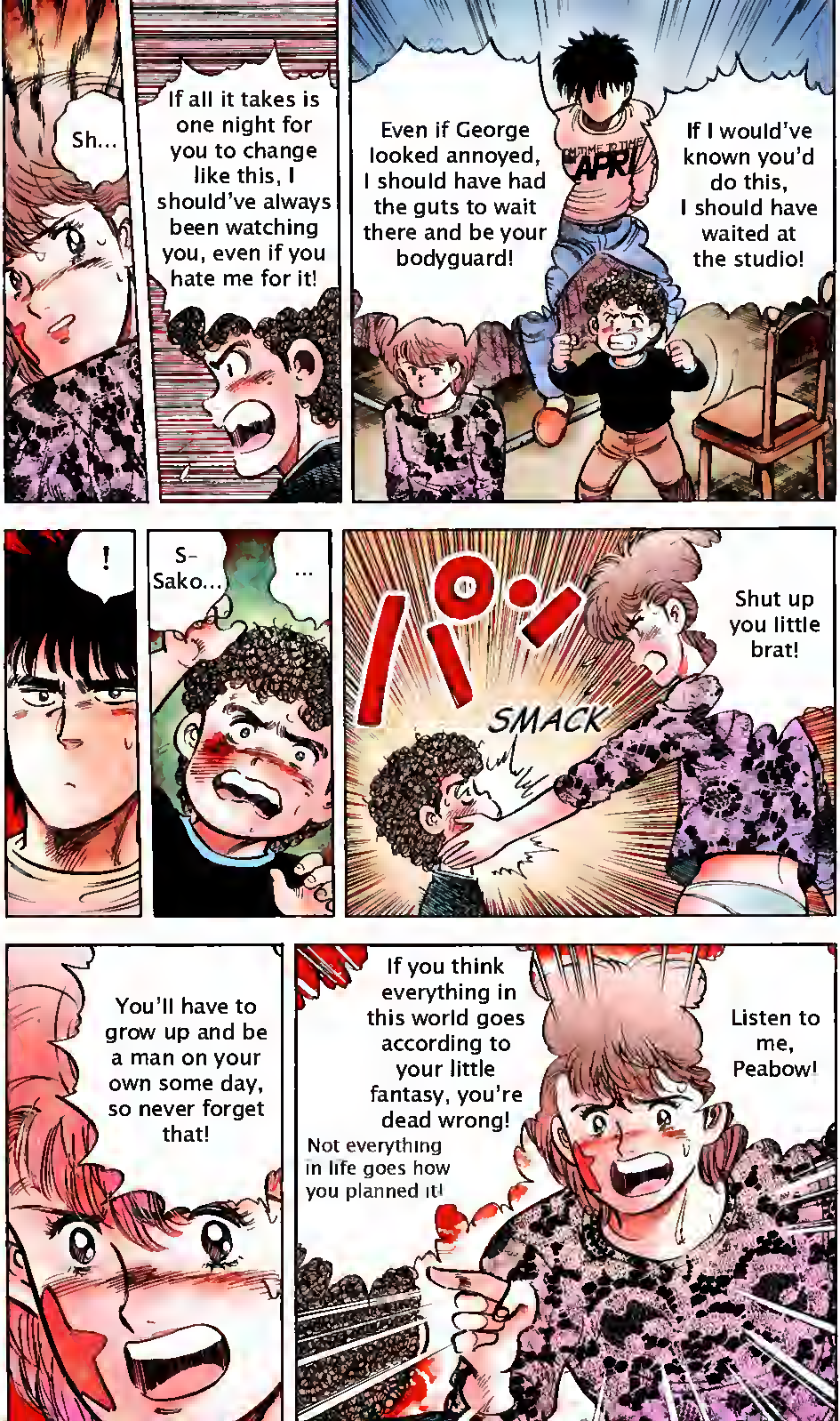

ZOOOOOM
That's a lie!
You're lying to us!
You can drink for three days straight and never pass out.
And if your recording really went that well...
...you'd come straight home to us, give me a big hug and say something like...
VR
VR
VR

Then you'd shower me with kisses...


"Or better yet, I could donate every ounce of my blood to those in need all over the world, with a big smile on my face!"
"Oh Peabow! I'm so happy, I could save the whales!"

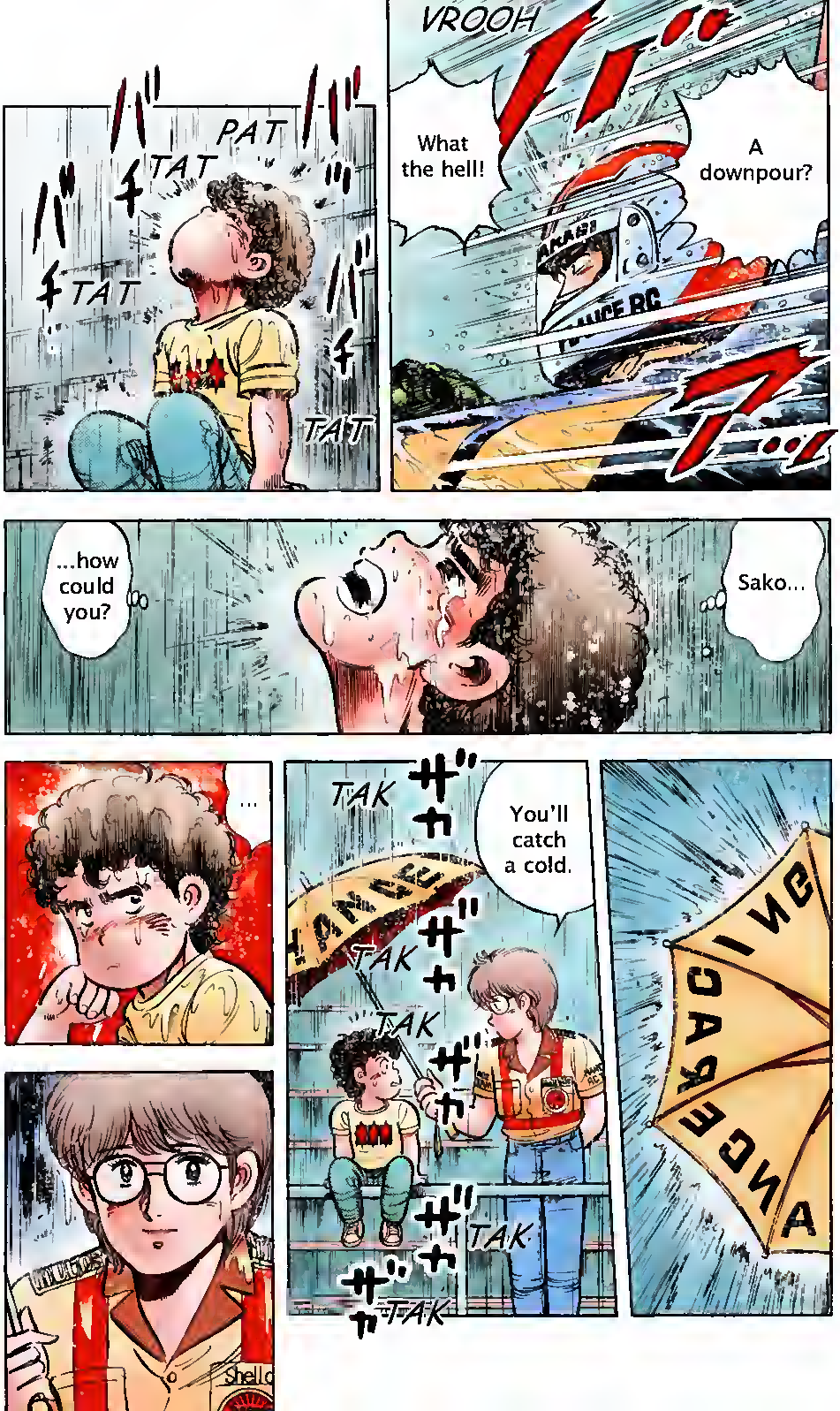
...I need to get some rest now.
Please...

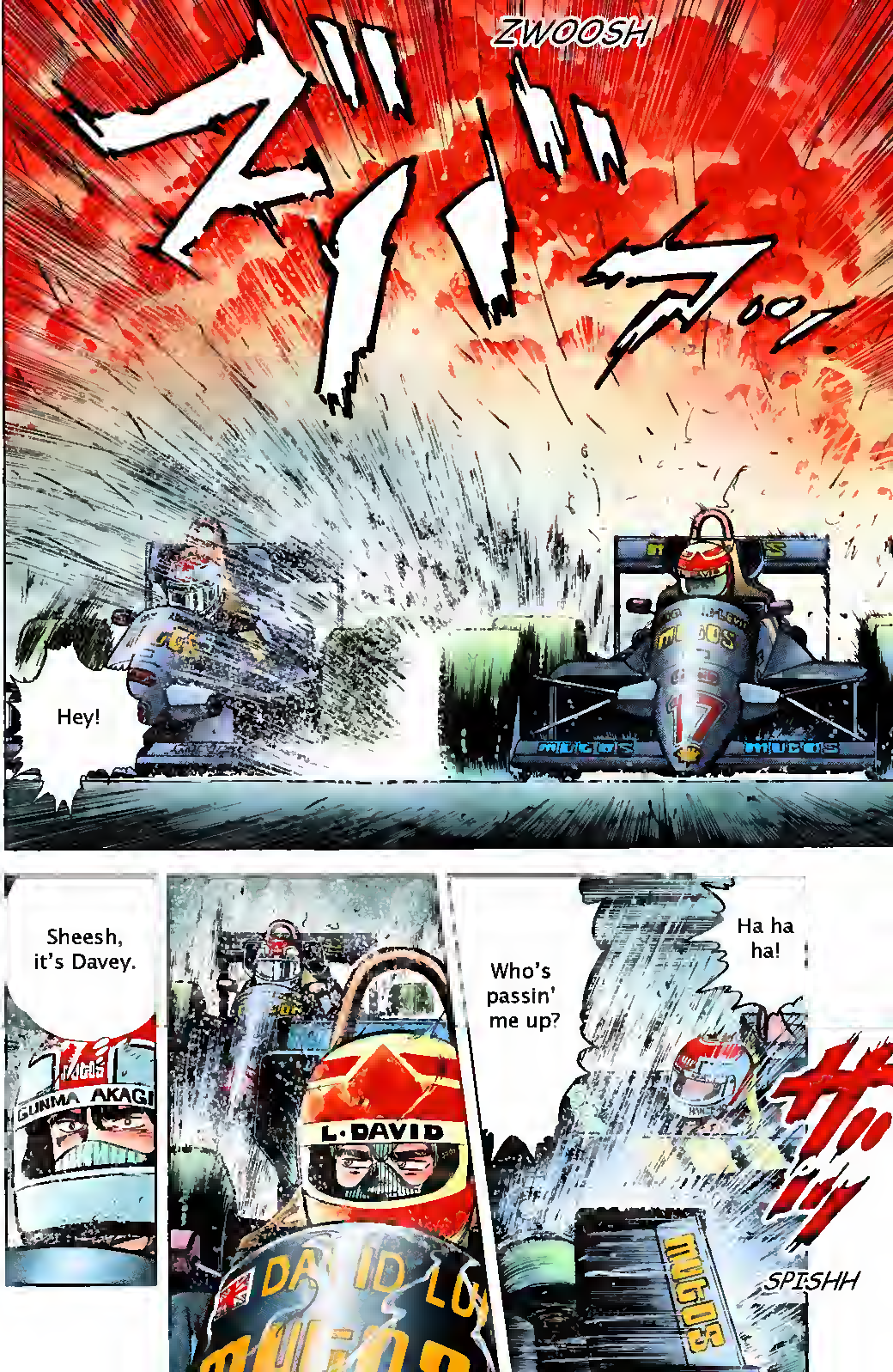
...and go on and on about how we'll tour the world for your concerts!


Sh...
If all it takes is one night for you to change like this, I should've always been watching you, even if you hate me for it!
Even if George looked annoyed, I should have had the guts to wait there and be your bodyguard!
If I would've known you'd do this, I should have waited at the studio!
APR
!
S-Sako...
...
SMACK
Shut up you little brat!
You'll have to grow up and be a man on your own some day, so never forget that!
If you think everything in this world goes according to your little fantasy, you're dead wrong!
Not everything in life goes how you planned it!
Listen to me, Peabow!

I can't baby you forever, you know!
Well you're gonna have to. You'll grow up and be a man.
S– Sako...
Or be on my own...
I don't wanna grow up.
And go live on your own.
You can't fight it, Peabow. One of these days you'll grow pubic hair and fall for some other girl.
Don't say that!
N... No!
You're just a liar!
You said we'll always be together! You said we're a family!
Shut up, Sako!
...
SLAM
Pea– bow.

BREHHHHHM
ZHUZHUZHUUNG
十二
ナイ
ナイナイ。

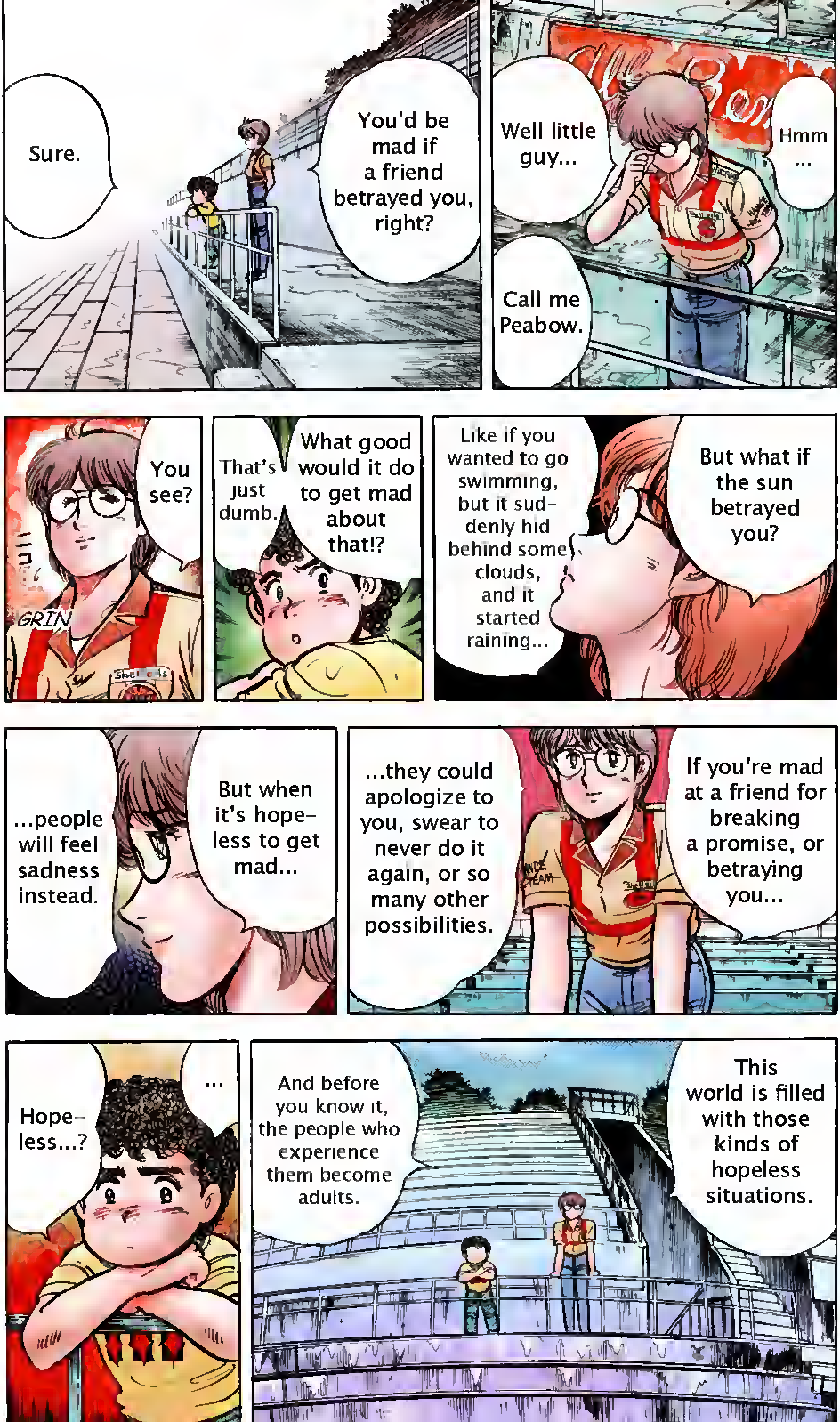

PAT
TAT
TAT
TAT
VROOH
What the hell!
A downpour?
AKASI
...how could you?
Sako...
...
TAK
TAK
TAK
TAK
TAK
You'll catch a cold.
ANGERAGO
Shell


ZWOOSH
Hey!
Sheesh, it's Davey.
GUNMA AKAGI
L·DAVID
Who's passin' me up?
Ha ha ha!
SPISHH

Although Gunma eventually crashed, and David finished seventh.
David is our primary driver, after all. And Gunma was way ahead of him at Silverstone, as our second driver!
PATTER
PATTER
He's fired up.
What does David think he's doing? This is only a practice run!
PATTER
Vallelunga's known for these downpours.
True... Gunma is all those reporters ever talk about.
But the way Gunma went out with a bang, he made himself into a fan favorite.
PATTER
Hm hm... Were you crying?
PATTER
!!
elf
PATTER
And I think we'll be seeing a lot more of this...
PATTER
...at the race tomorrow!
PATTER
PATTER

I cry when I want, and laugh when I want!
Leave me alone!
Not like a grown up...
It's just unusual for a boy.
So what if I was!
Here's proof that I'm sorry.
FWOOP
Then you get it?
I'm sorry. That was rude of me.
I'm a kid, and I'll always be a kid! So leave me alone!
They smile when they're sad, cry when they're happy... It's stupid!
As long as you get it.
It's fine.
Mm-hm?
CHEW
CHEW
CHEW
Hey, Junko...
See?
I guess so.
...
CHEW
Are you... a grown up?

But you're staying here.
Gunma loves Sako.
...
You won't go back to Japan.
It's because you're an adult. You stay here even though it's hard for you.
Plus she loves me and Gunma, but she's hanging out with George.
Look at Sako. Her recording went so well, but she's miserable.
PANG
PENG
PLOK
パコ
I don't get grownups at all!
I mean, what's the point?
How come people have to grow up?
...

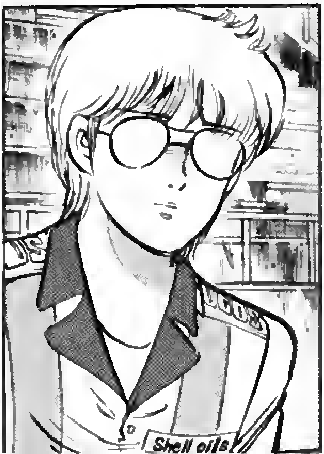

Sure.
You'd be mad if a friend betrayed you, right?
Well little guy...
Hmm ...
Call me Peabow.
You see?
GRIN
That's just dumb.
What good would it do to get mad about that!?
Like if you wanted to go swimming, but it suddenly hid behind some clouds, and it started raining...
But what if the sun betrayed you?
...people will feel sadness instead.
But when it's hopeless to get mad...
...they could apologize to you, swear to never do it again, or so many other possibilities.
If you're mad at a friend for breaking a promise, or betraying you...
Hopeless...?
...
And before you know it, the people who experience them become adults.
This world is filled with those kinds of hopeless situations.

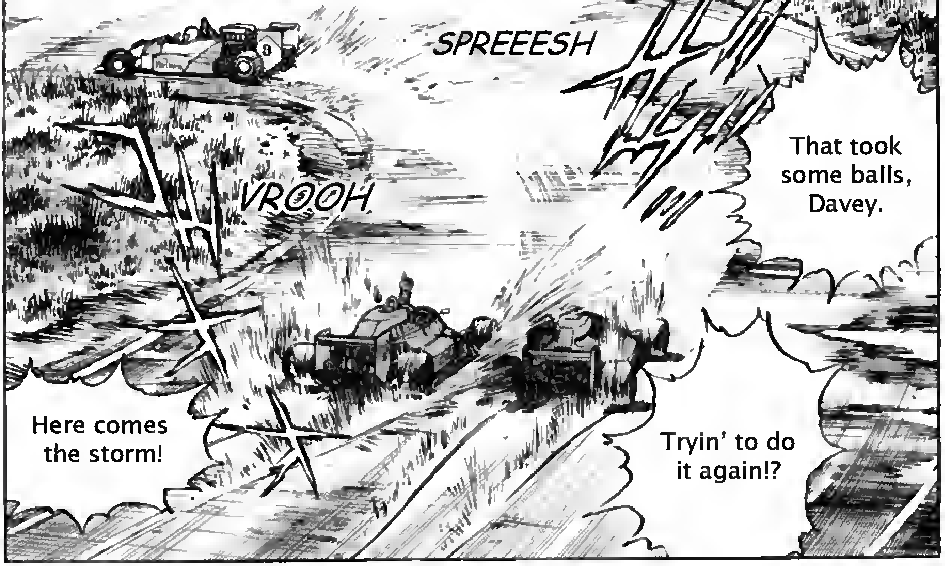
...just as you could never control the sun, or stop the rain...
People's feelings, your own desires...
Uh-huh. Things like illnesses, or death.
...the real world is filled with things we have no control over.
HANCE
NCE TEAM

...we just gotta give up?
So...

...

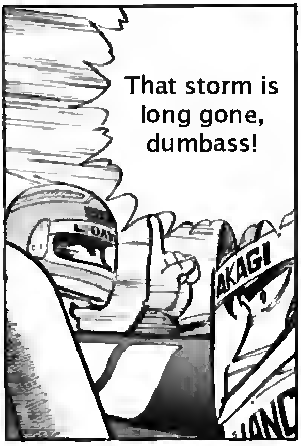
NO!


Shell oils!


SPREEESH
VROOH
That took some balls, Davey.
Here comes the storm!
Tryin' to do it again!?

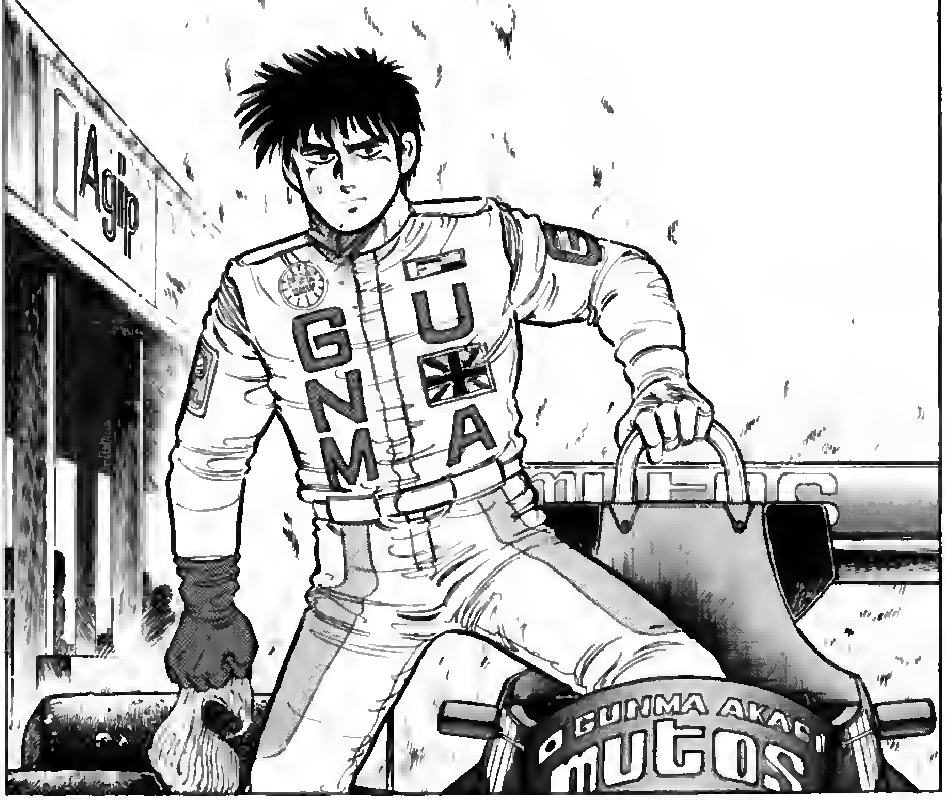
Boom! Boom! Here it comes!
Is that how you wanna play it!?
AKAGI

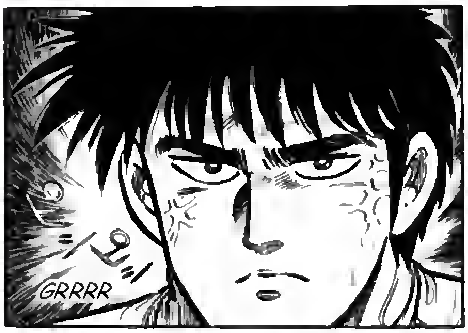
Boom! Here it comes!
No no! I'm the storm!

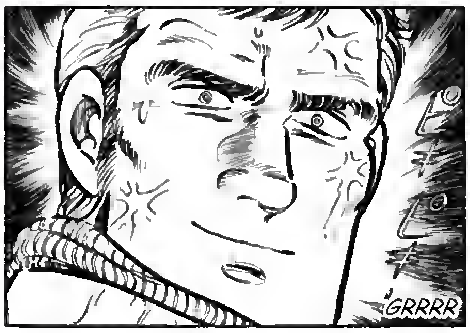

That storm is long gone, dumbass!
AKAGI

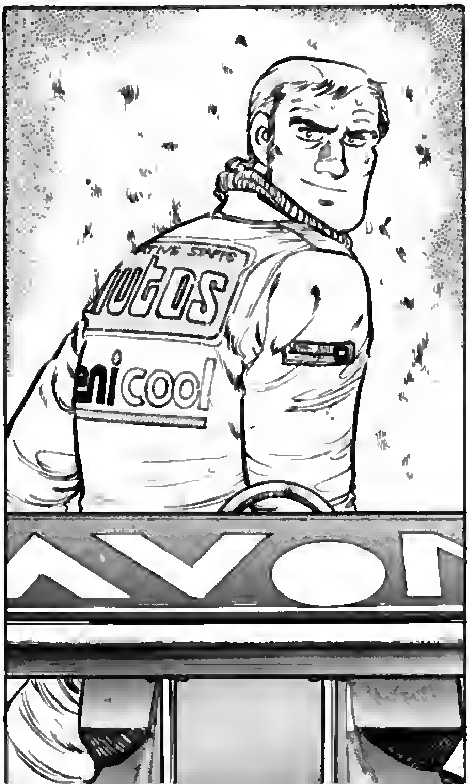
Boom! Boom!
Boom! Boom! Splash!

Chapter 2: Peabow Syndrome

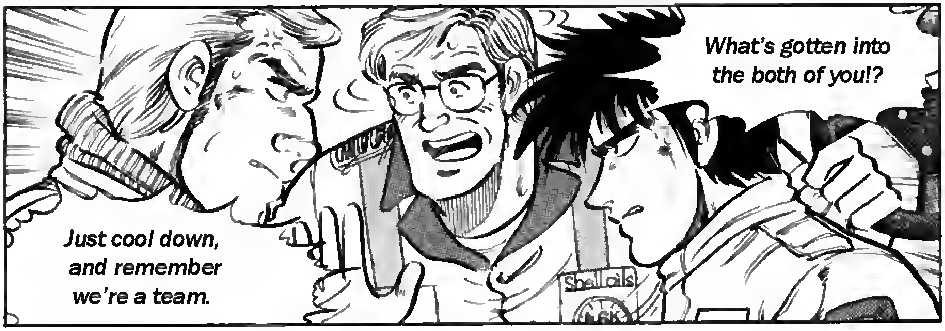

Agip
GUNMA
GUNMA AKAGI
mutos

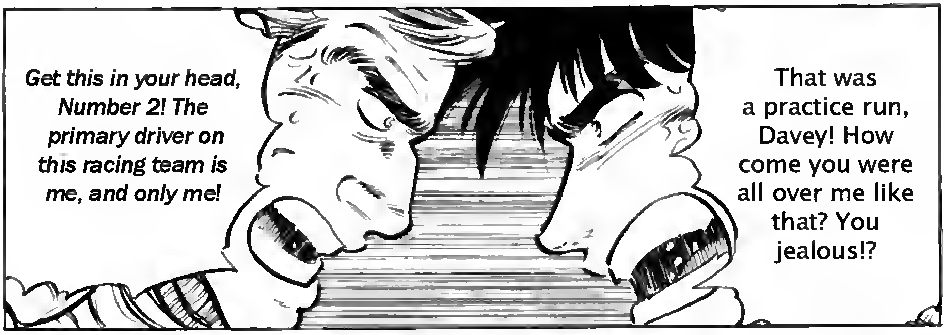

GRRRR


GRRRR

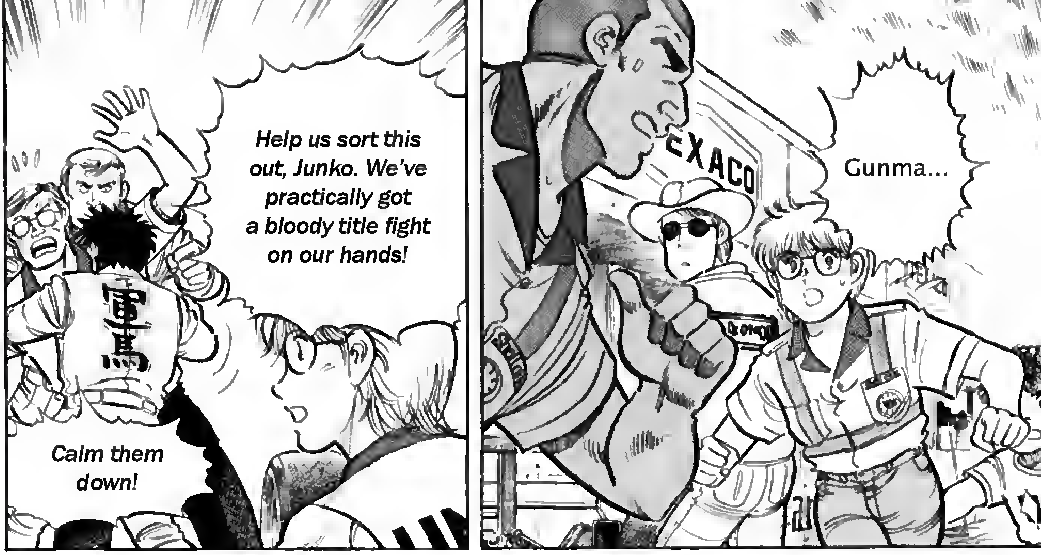

mutos
eni cool

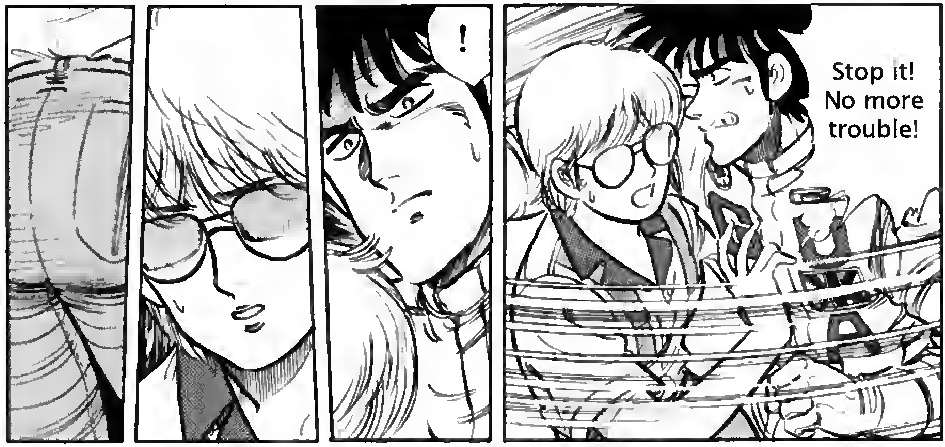
Agip
Ag
Gunma...
David...

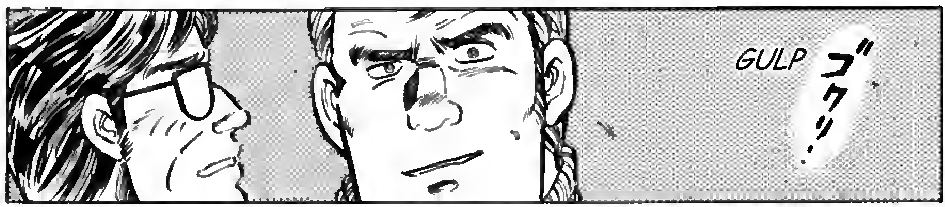

What's gotten into the both of you!?
Just cool down, and remember we're a team.

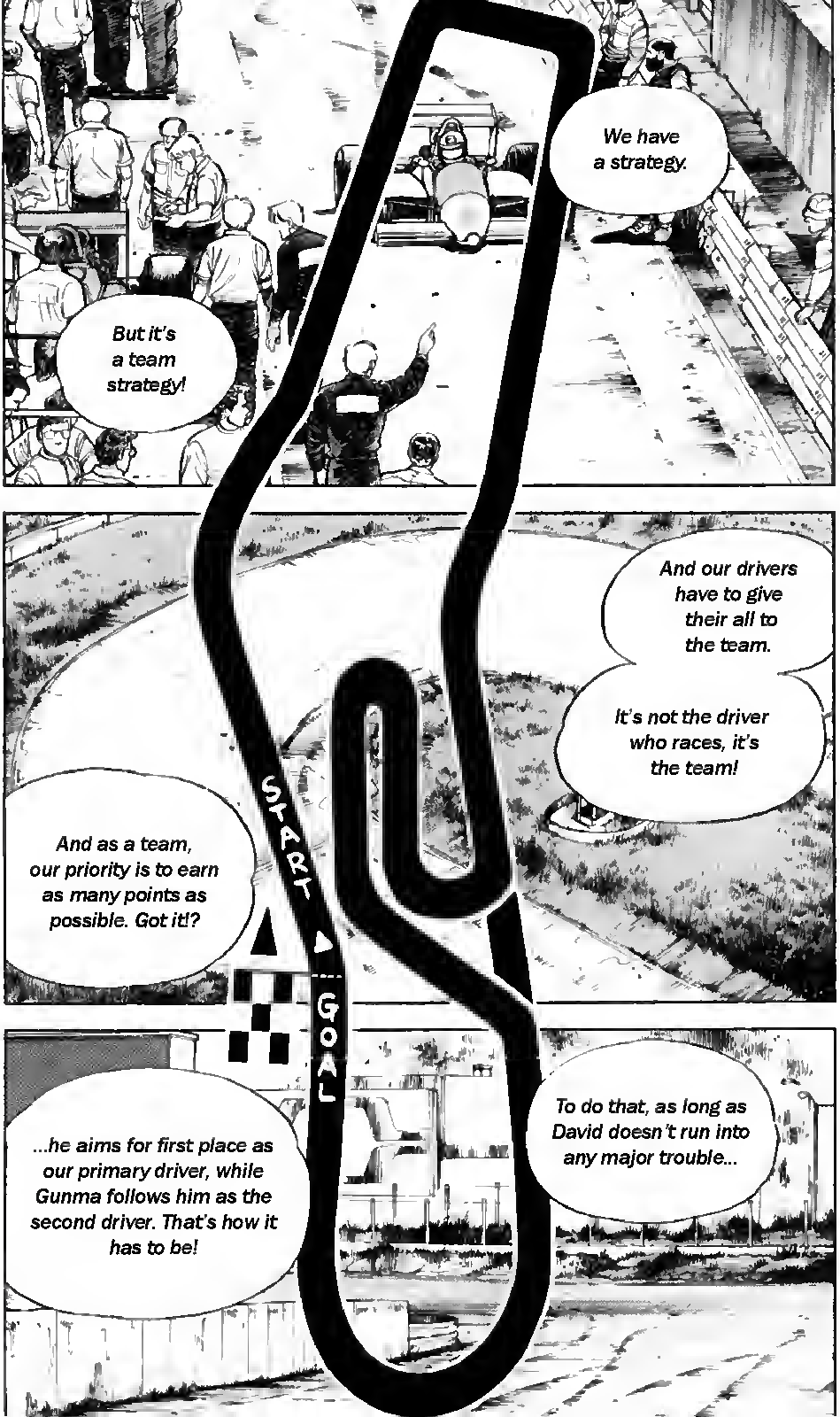

Get this in your head, Number 2! The primary driver on this racing team is me, and only me!
That was a practice run, Davey! How come you were all over me like that? You jealous!?

Somebody translate this!
Where the hell is Ms. Junko!?


Help us sort this out, Junko. We've practically got a bloody title fight on our hands!
Calm them down!
EXACO
Gunma...


!
Stop it! No more trouble!


GULP
ゴクリ


We have a strategy.
But it's a team strategy!
And our drivers have to give their all to the team.
It's not the driver who races, it's the team!
And as a team, our priority is to earn as many points as possible. Got it!?
START
GOAL
To do that, as long as David doesn't run into any major trouble...
...he aims for first place as our primary driver, while Gunma follows him as the second driver. That's how it has to be!

Are you freakin' kidding me!? That's bull!
GRIN
ニヤ
ニヤ…

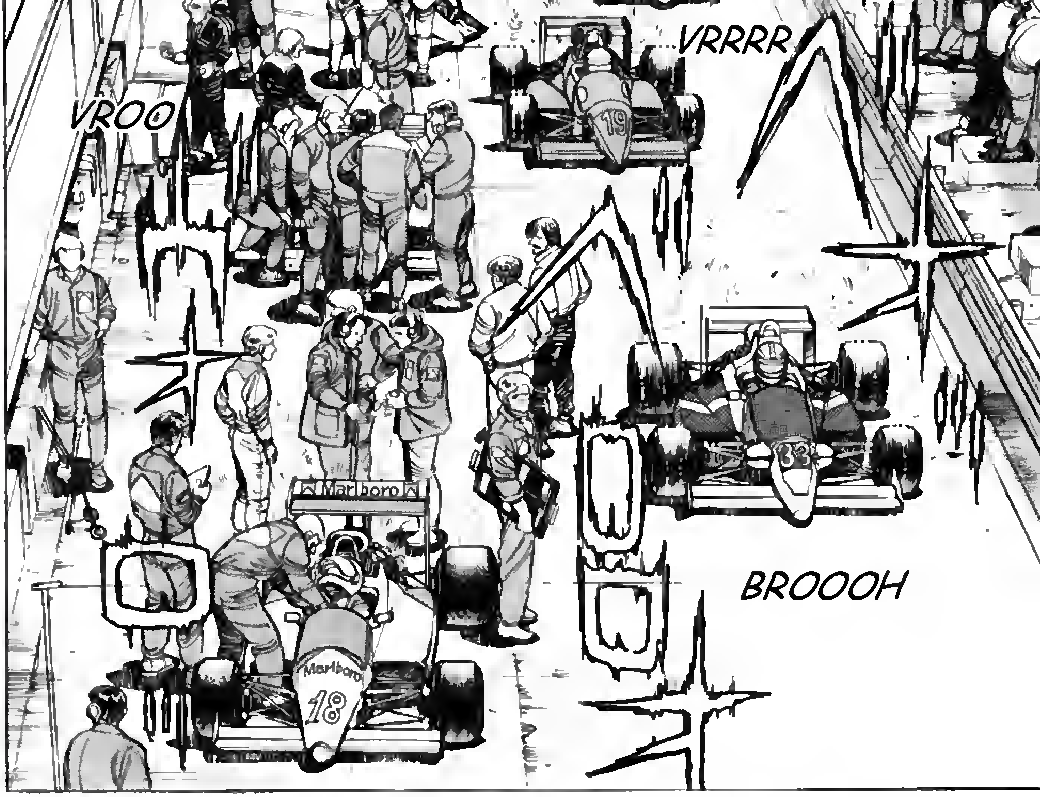
I'm not saying you can't ever win. If David isn't feeling it, you should go for the top spot.
You can't expect me to sit here and take that!
THUD
No, that's your role as second driver!

But if David's in first, or among the top rankings, you need to stay behind him and protect this lead!
Nobo-dy...
But...

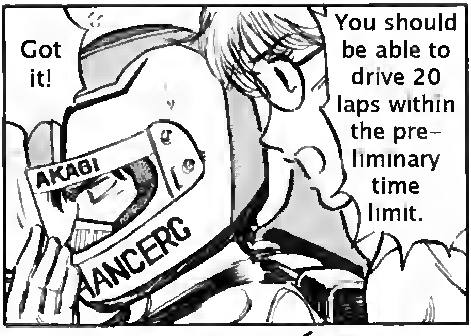
This chap's got issues...
Nobody!
Nobody gets in front of me!
GUNMA
Just calm down, Gunma!
Ah...
THUMP
BAM
Shut up! You want calm!?
!?
THIK
I'm sorry, David.
Well, Ms. Junko. What a pleasant surprise!

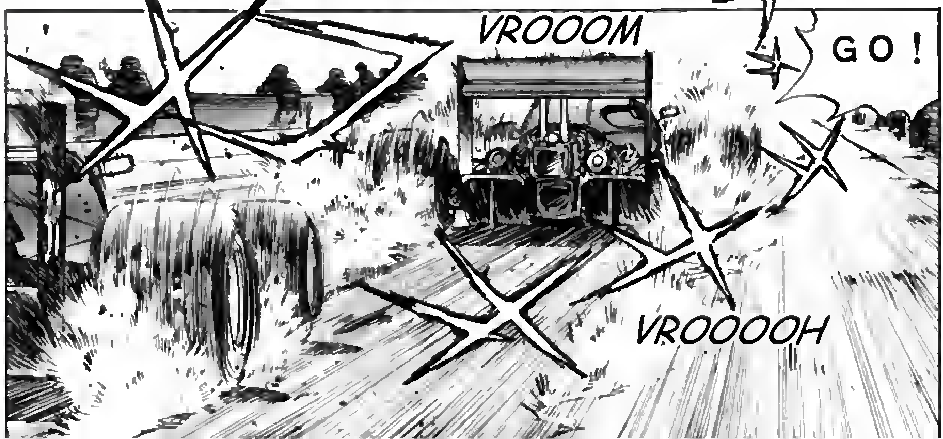
I've got a suggestion, Hans.
AHEM
...
So then...
Gunma's still young, and I understand his reckless desire to win at all costs.
David!
How about we clarify things at the preliminary this afternoon?
If Gunma gets a better time than me, we can switch roles.
Of course, I have no desire to hand my position to anyone.
...
How about it, Gunma!?
But this would convince him of what his role is on the team.
Much more effective than orders from the boss to be a team player.

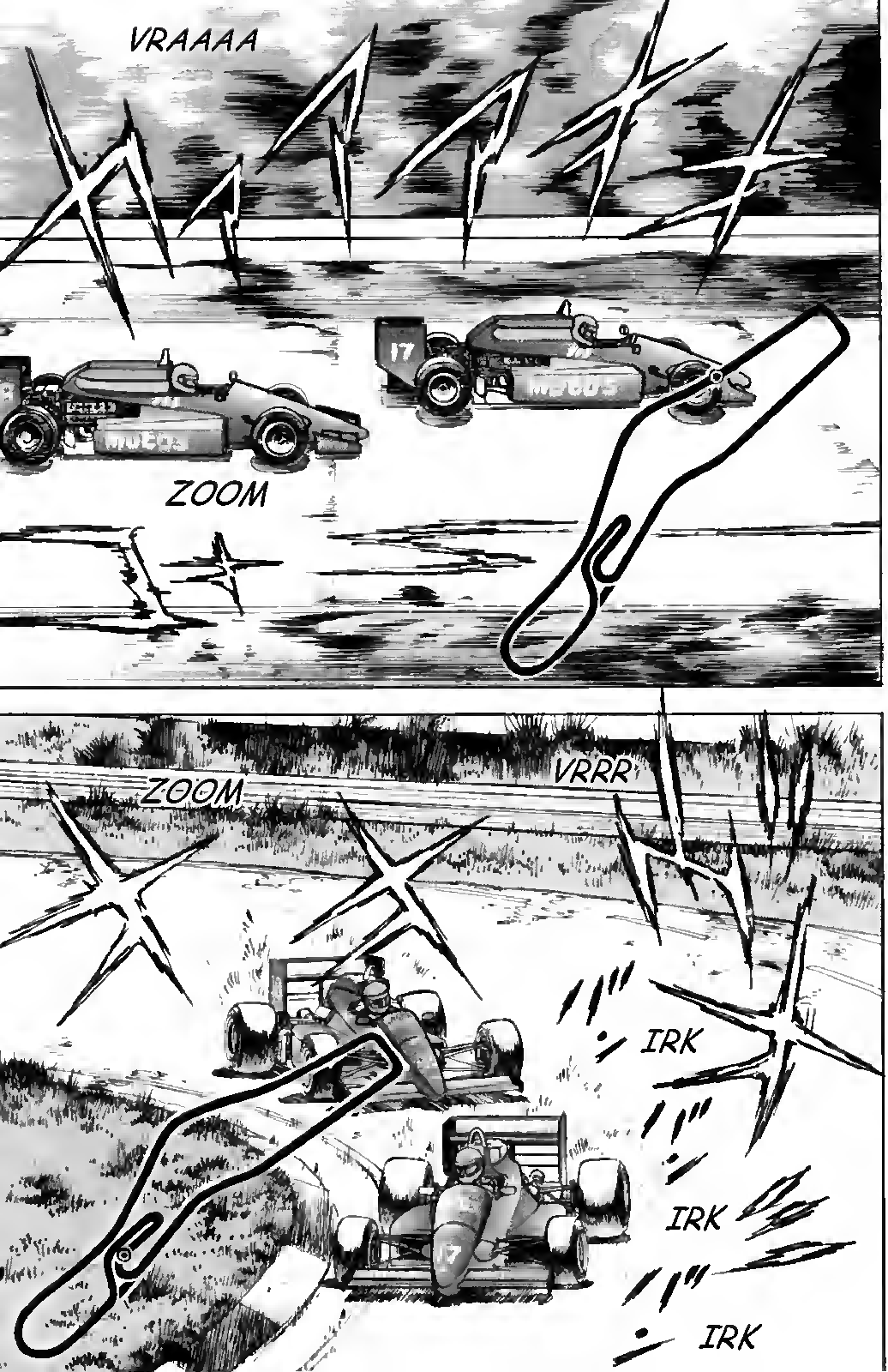
Sigh... If that's how you want to handle this David, so be it.
But Gunma!
Just gotta score a better time than you, right!?
I'm in!
GUNMA
If you refuse to do so, you won't have a spot in F3000 after the second race! Is that clear!?
If you can't score a better time than David in the preliminary this afternoon, you follow the team strategy as planned!
I'm gonna kill it!
I'm still a bit embarrassed about earlier... Hmf hmf hmf...
...

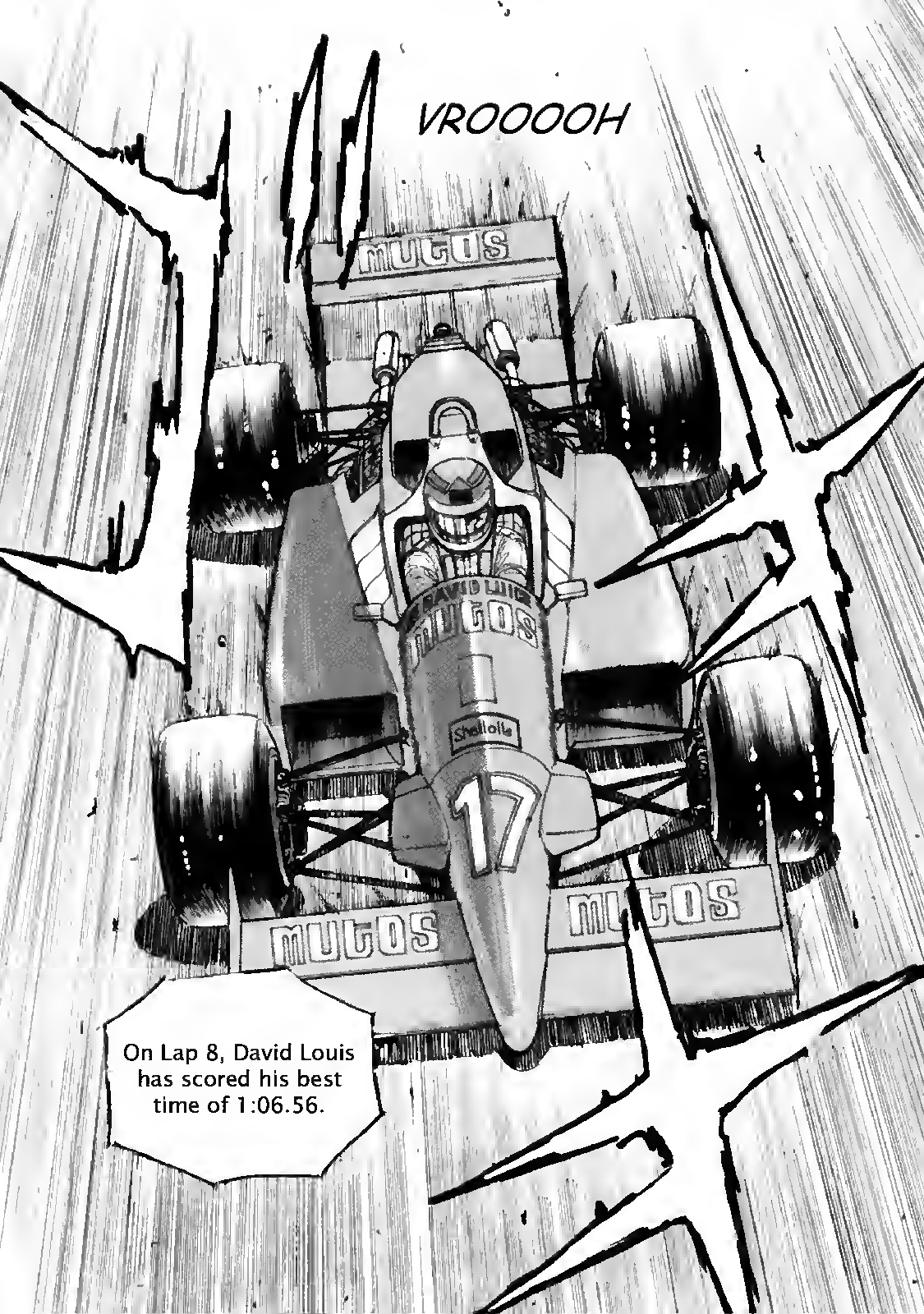

VROO
VRRRR
Marlboro
19
33
Marlboro
18
BROOOH

I'll show you my best time within the first 10 laps!
DAVE
10

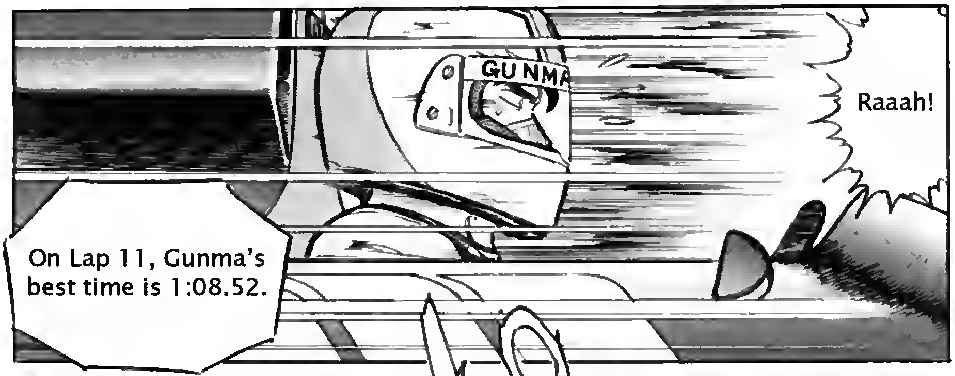

Got it!
You should be able to drive 20 laps within the pre-liminary time limit.
AKAGI
10
TANCERC


VROOOM
GO!
VROOOOH


VRAAAA
17
ZOOM
ZOOM
VRRR
IRK
IRK
IRK
17


VROOOOH
MUTOS
DAVID LOUIS
MUTOS
Shelloils
17
MUTOS
MUTOS
On Lap 8, David Louis has scored his best time of 1:06.56.

VRRR
ZSHHH
On Lap 9, Gunma's best time is 1:09.21.


GUNMA
Raaah!
On Lap 11, Gunma's best time is 1:08.52.

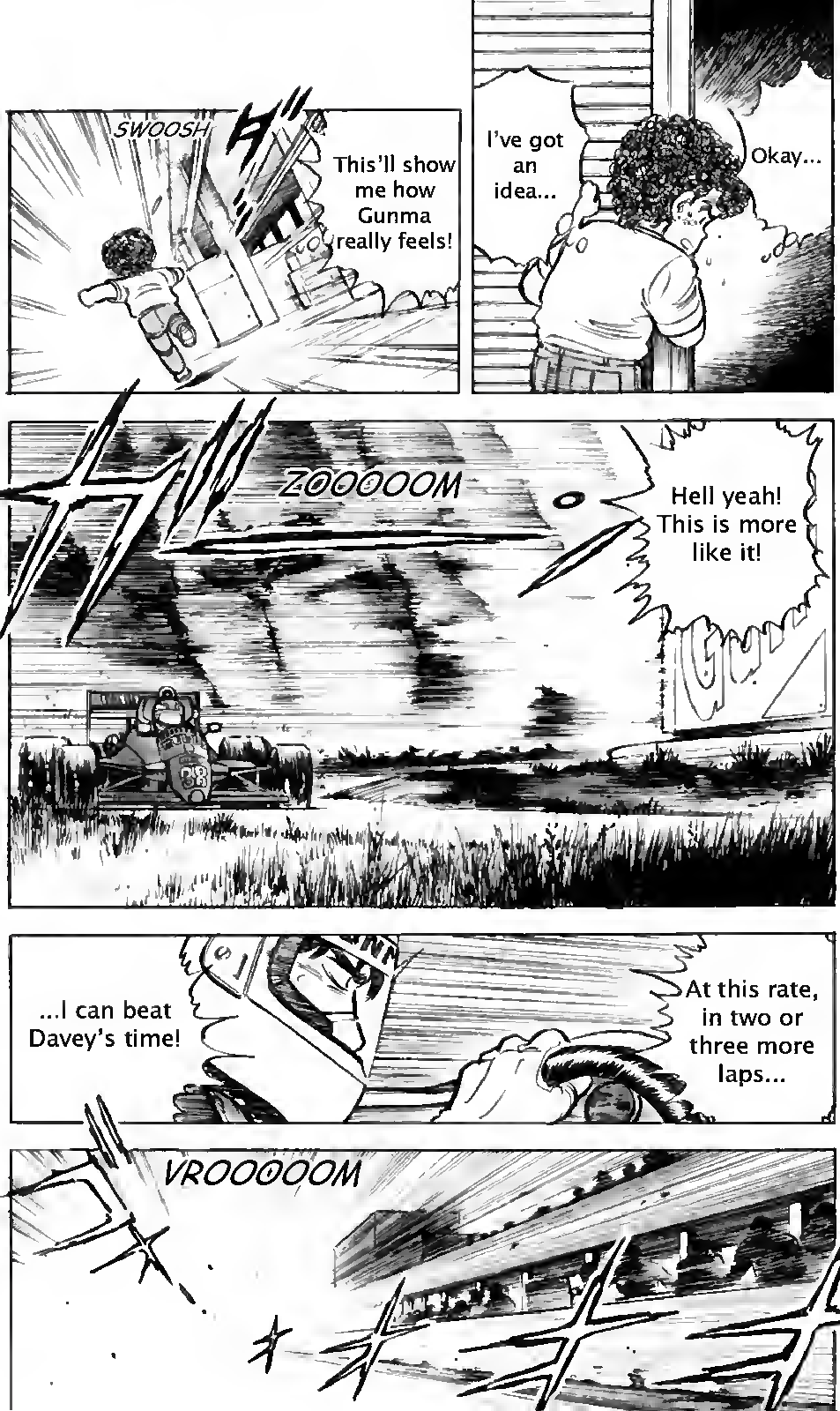
!?
He's more than two seconds behind David.
ZOOOM

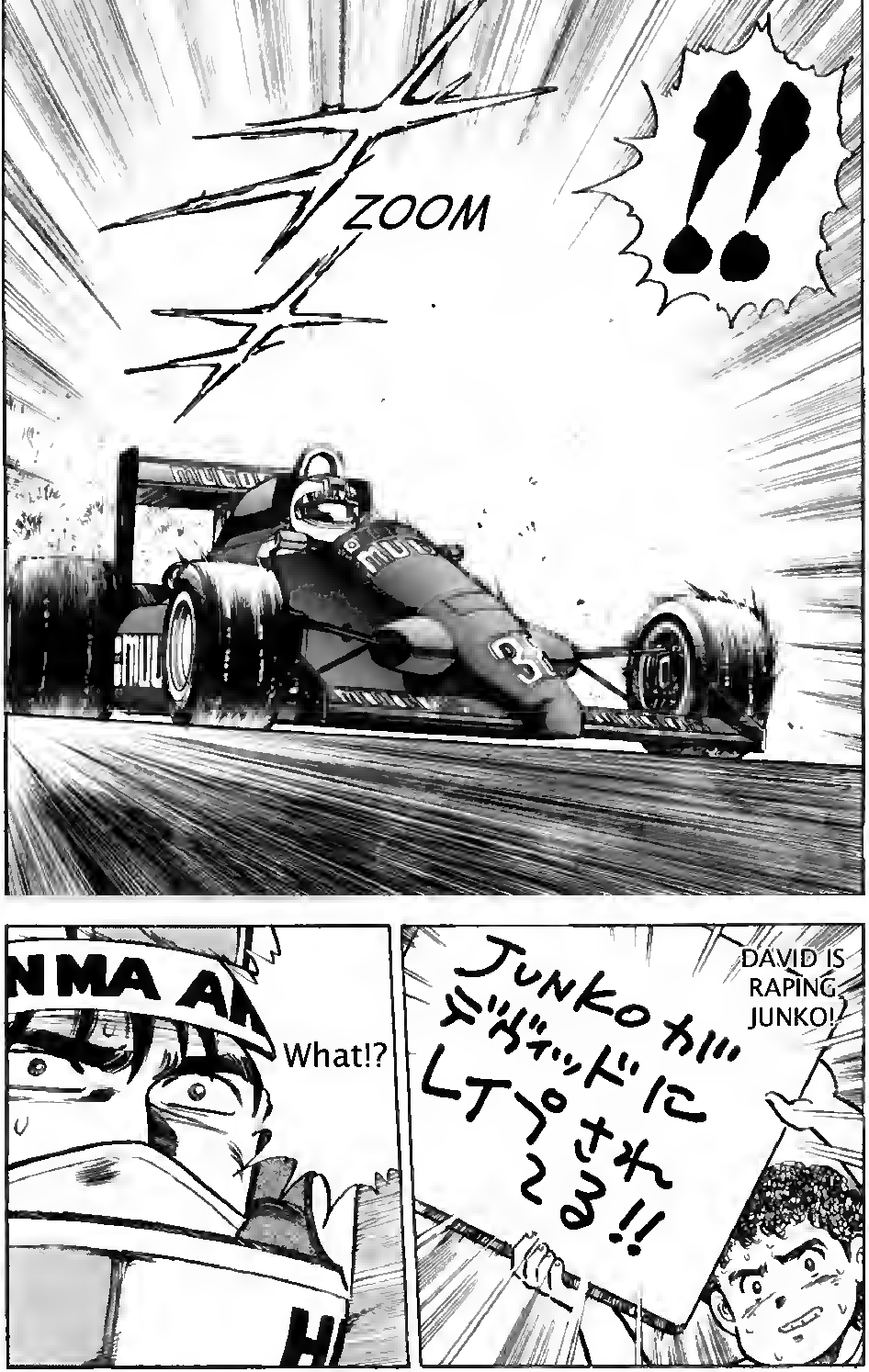
BRAAAAAAAH

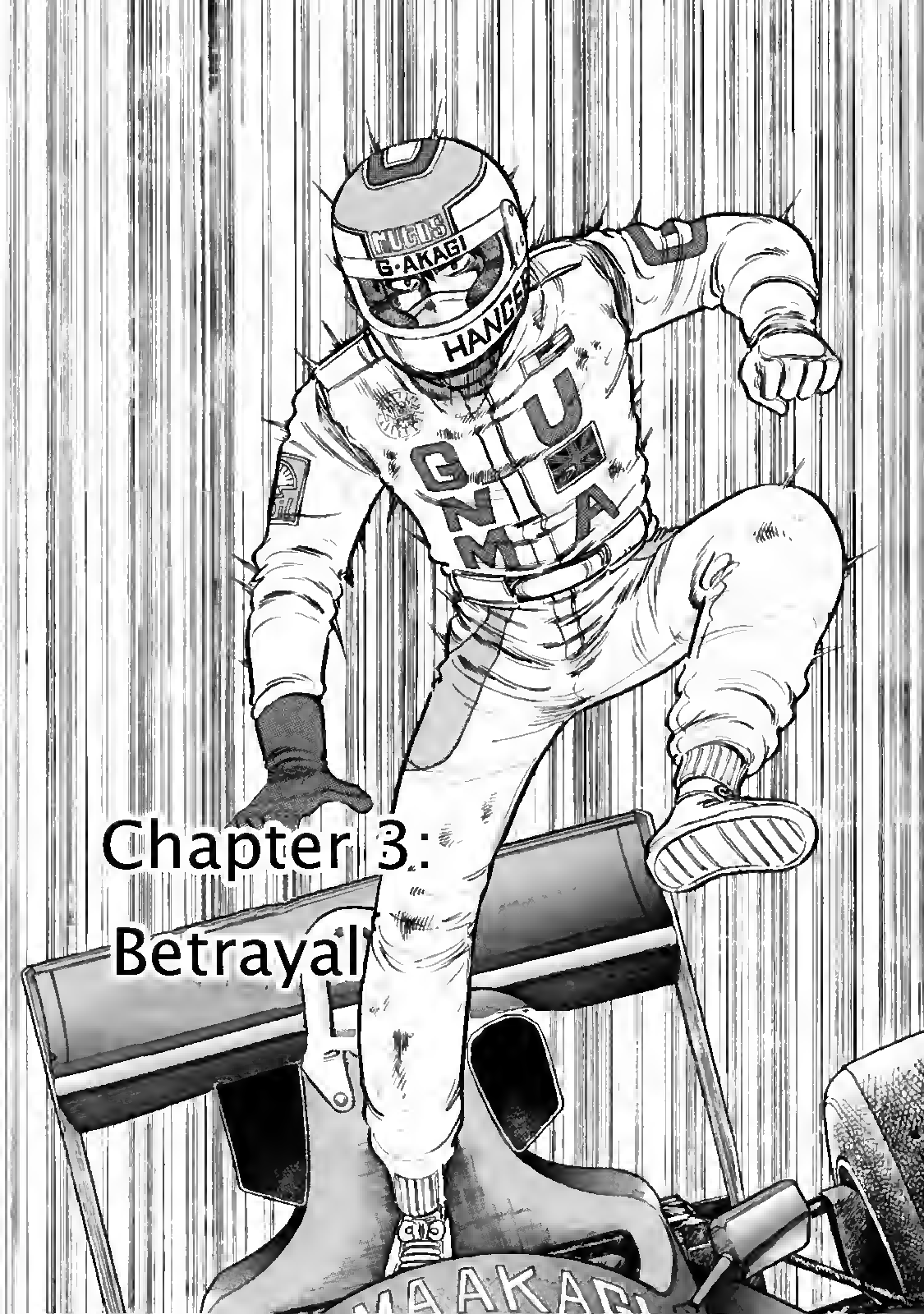
What's wrong, David!?
I'm done. My best time is set.
VRRRRM
Come with me.
Ha ha ha...
Gunma's over 2 seconds behind!
I've won the pole position two years in a row at Vallelunga. No one can beat me here!
You make it look easy!
I've got something to show you.
!?

?
What is it, David?
This isn't a joke, Junko. I'm dead serious.
What are you doing!? This isn't funny!
SHATTER
David...
!?
GRIP
I've fallen for you, baby. There's nothing between you and Gunma, right?
So we're good to go.
Hey... That's Junko.

You felt it on my lap, didn't you? Feel it some more...
A racer... a truly dyed-in-the-wool racer... always wants to shag a woman after a good run.
HUFF
HUFF
HUFF
This time there's no racing suit between us... Touch it... Huff huff huff...
You understand my needs, don't you...? So be my woman.
ZOOOOOM
Shell Oils
38
MUGEN


SWOOSH
This'll show me how Gunma really feels!
I've got an idea...
Okay...
ZOOOOOM
Hell yeah! This is more like it!
...I can beat Davey's time!
At this rate, in two or three more laps...
VROOOOOM

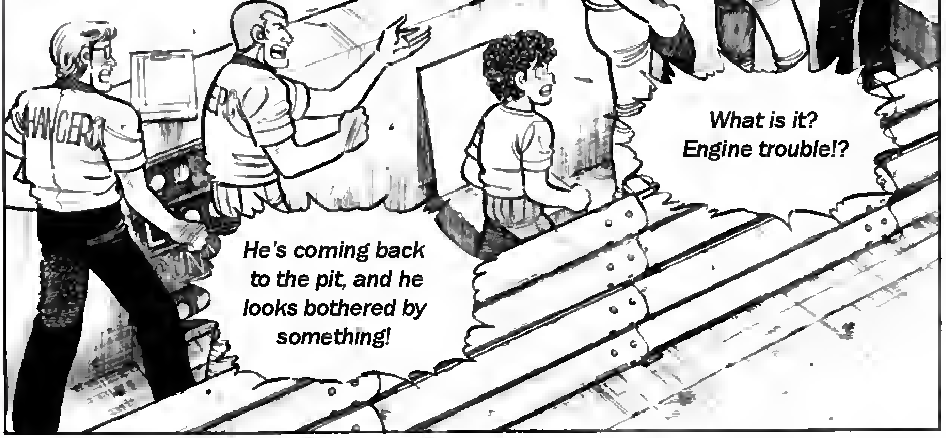

ZOOM
!!
What!?
JUNKOが
デヴィッドに
レイプされる!!
DAVID IS
RAPING
JUNKO!

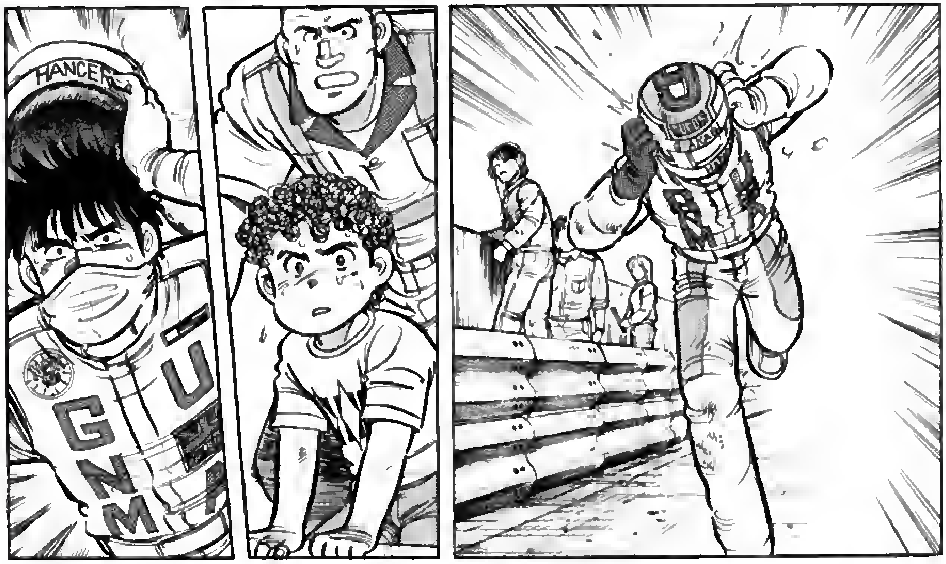


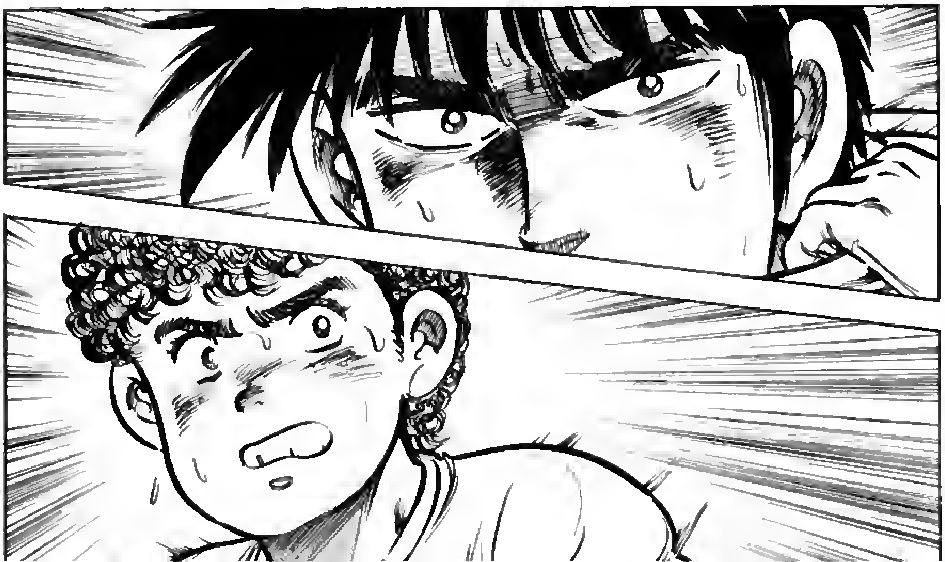
Chapter 3: Betrayal

David's raping Junko!?
What!?
6 AKAGI
GENMA AKAGI
DAVID IS RAPING JUNKO!
Junkoが デヴィッドに レイプされる!!
Geez...!
What the hell's going on!?
Wh...
VROOOM
Agip
There.

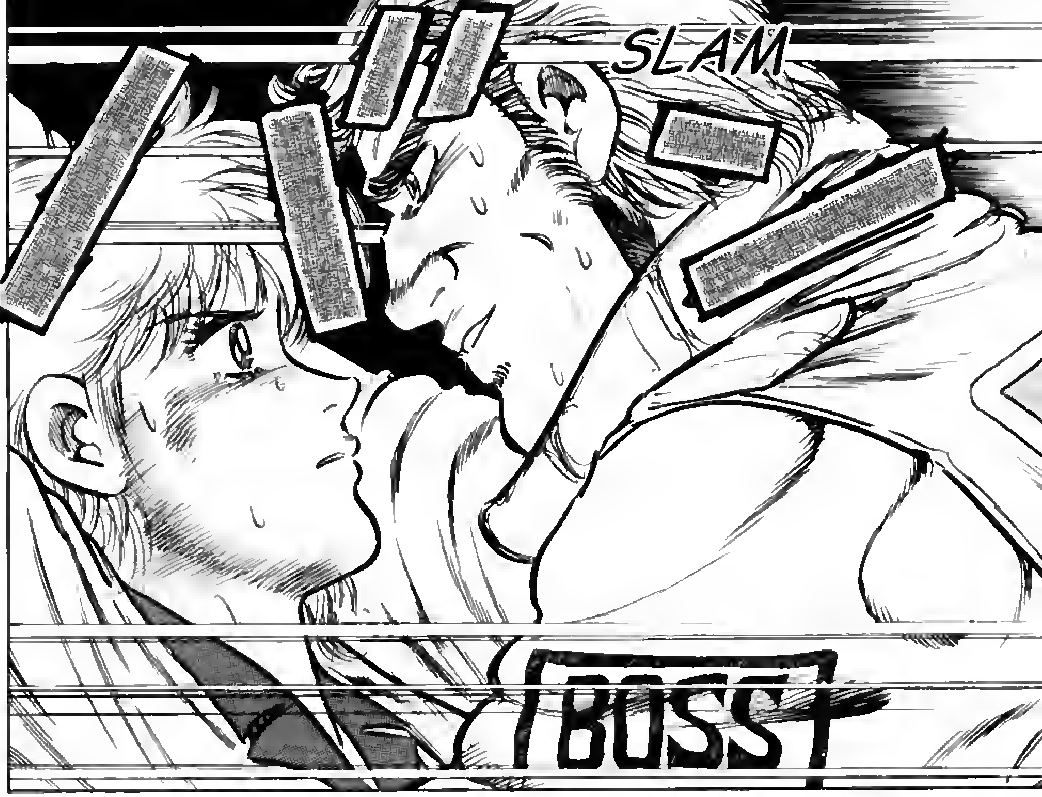
...how do you really feel about Junko?
Now I'll know your true feelings.
Gunma...
What's Gunma doing!? He just stopped!
!?
SCREEEEEECH
SWOOF

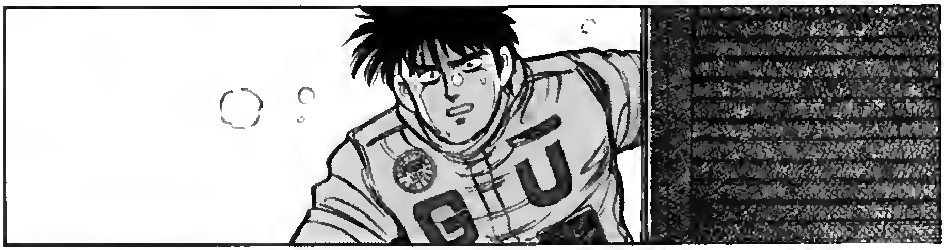

What is it? Engine trouble!?
He's coming back to the pit, and he looks bothered by something!

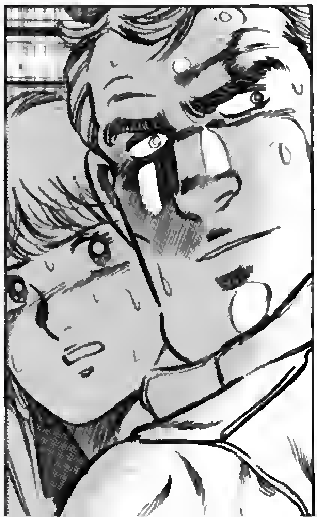


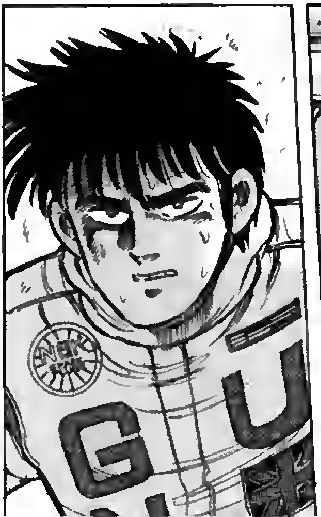


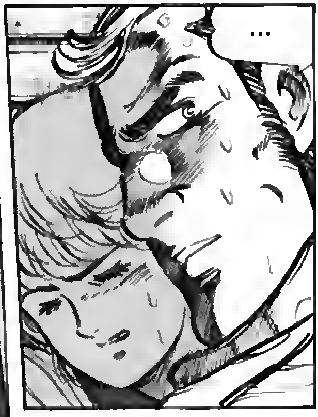
Gun-
ma...
Gu
...
Where's
Junko!?
What wrong,
Gunma!?
Pea-
bow!
Gu...
SWOOSH
The
garage...
The empty
one...
Third from
the back.
Spit it
out!
He could be
disqualified if he
doesn't get
back here!
Where the hell is
he going? He hasn't even
got a good time
on the bloody
preliminary.
Show
me
now.
Gunma
...


SLAM
BOSS!

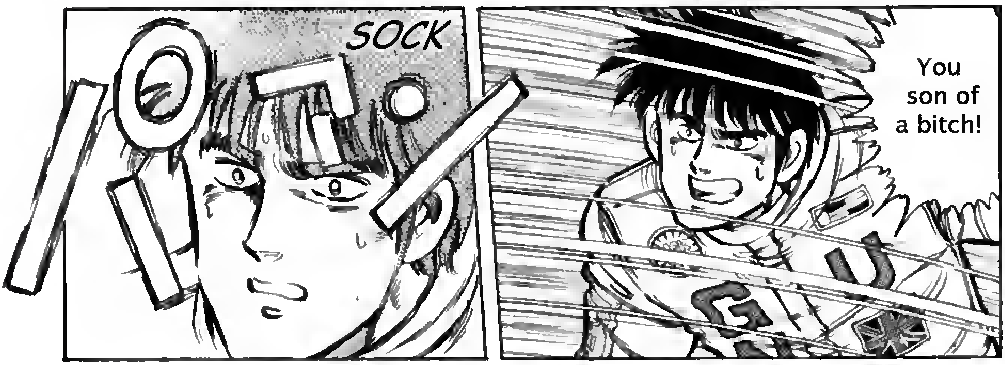







...

Japanese women are terribly frigid. I tried to heat her up, but she won't thaw out... Ha ha...
Oh... Heh heh heh... You know what...
Shell
deni
BOSS

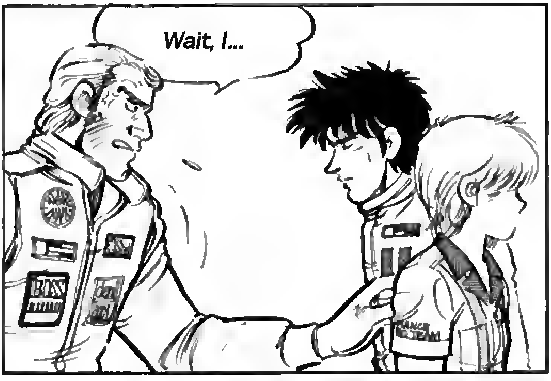

SOCK
You son of a bitch!

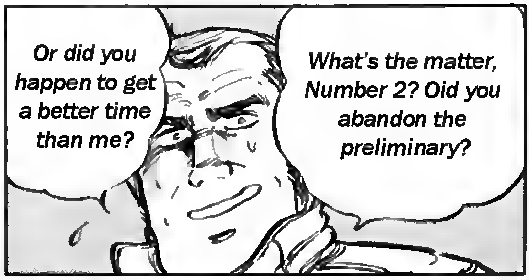
What a vile man you are! Attacking me like that, using vulgar language!
And how dare you call me frigid! What kind of women have you been sleeping around with!?

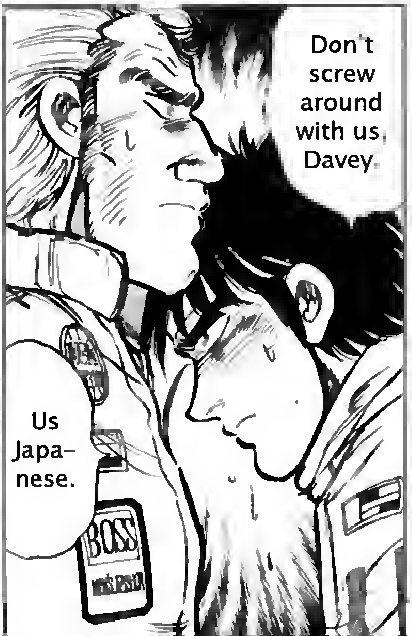
deni

I'd rather be raped by a dog than the likes of you!
But I have zero interest in slimeballs like you! Absolutely zero!
I'll say this as a matter of honor, that I feel love, and even lust, for men just like any other woman!
NO FIRE

!
SIFF
...


Wait, I...


Or did you happen to get a better time than me?
What's the matter, Number 2? Oid you abandon the preliminary?


Don't screw around with us, Davey.
Us Japa-nese.

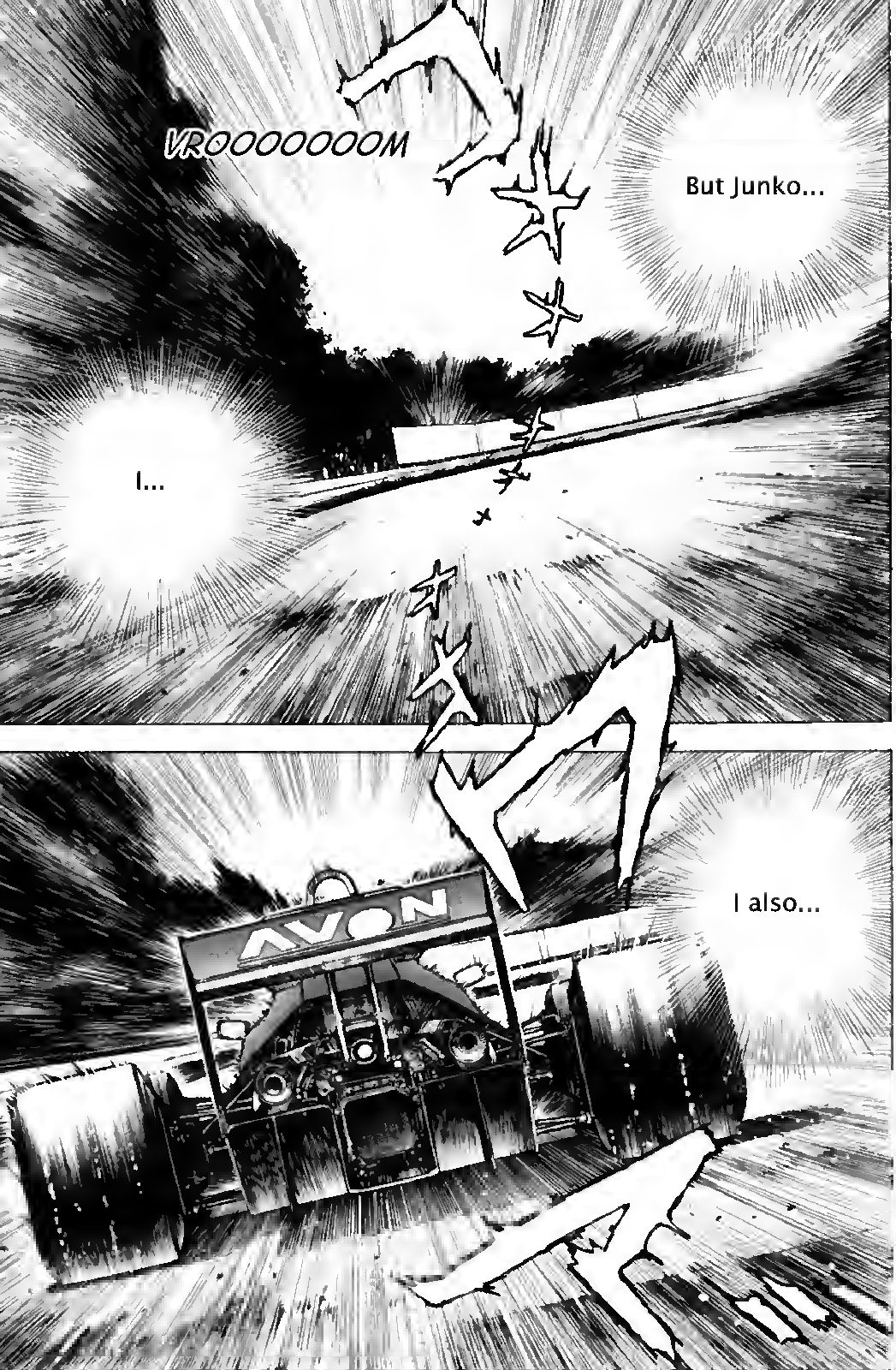
...I'll kill you!
Next time you pull somethin' with Junko...

SPIN
Wait up.
Junko!
You too?
So you better stay away from 'em.
I... I'll just give you this one warning. When a driver gets outta his car, he's really excited.
!!
I... Um...
You wanna "shag" some woman as soon as you hop out of your stupid car!?
You too, Gunma!?
And what about her!?
I guess you could say that.
Yeah.

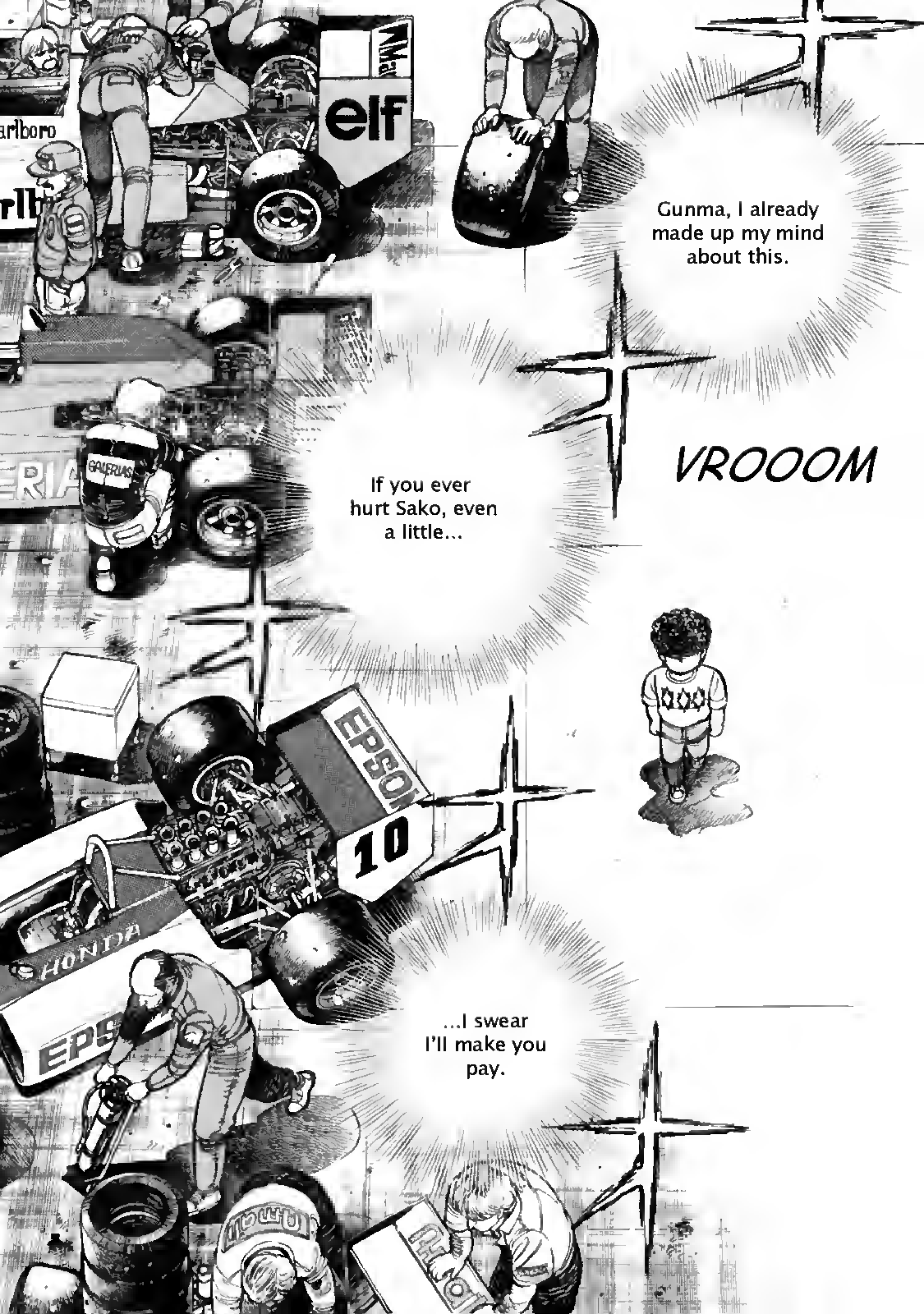
Sako's uh...
Junko!
What about Sako, huh!? Is that how you treat her!?
With Sako, I...
I really ...
Sako's ...
...diff-erent.
Don't talk about her like that.
What in the world got into me...
Sor-ry.
I'm sorry.
Junko...
Ju...

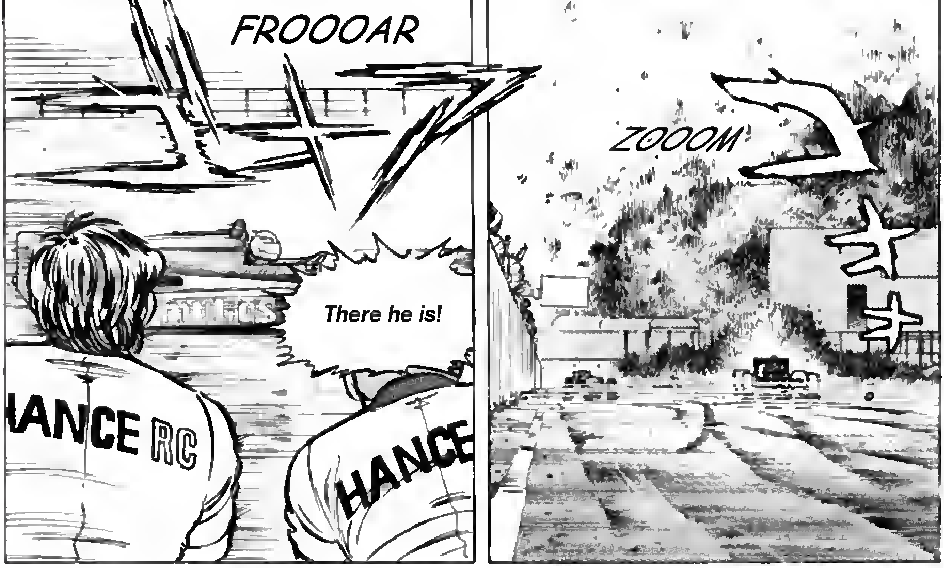
Shut up! I had to take a dump, okay!?
Are you intending on failing the preliminary, Gunma!? There's no time!
Even if you get back out there, you couldn't get more than three laps in! What's gotten into you!?
Tsh.
That's plenty of time.
Yes!
Last... Uhh. Three lap?
VREHHHHH
38
DENSO

OOOH
VROOH
My head's spinnin'!
Sheesh ...
ZOOOOM
I love...
...Sako!

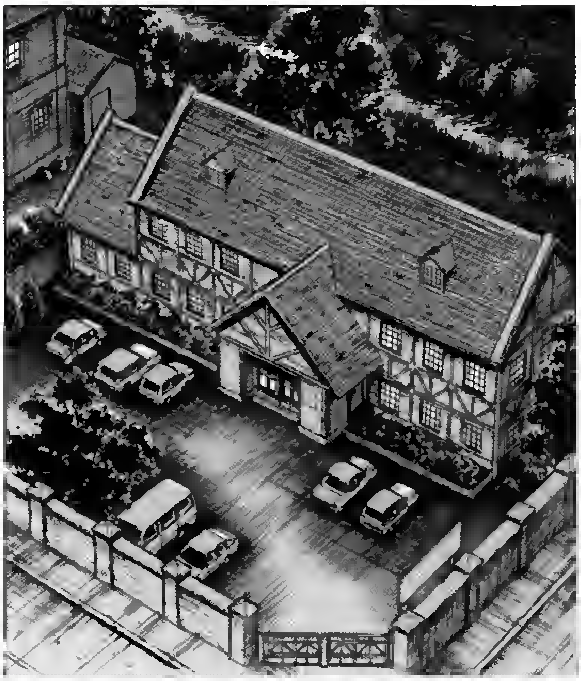

VROOOOOOOM
But Junko...
I...
AVON
I also...

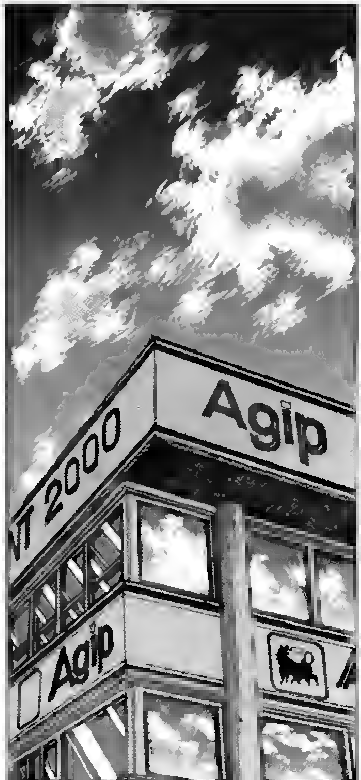
BREEEH
ZOOOM
TONE
BRIDESTONE
VRRRRR
HANCOCK
VROOH VROOH
VROOOOM
VRRRRR


elf
Gunma, I already made up my mind about this.
VROOOM
If you ever hurt Sako, even a little...
10
HONDA
...I swear I'll make you pay.


FROOOAR
There he is!
ANCE RC
HANCE
ZOOOM

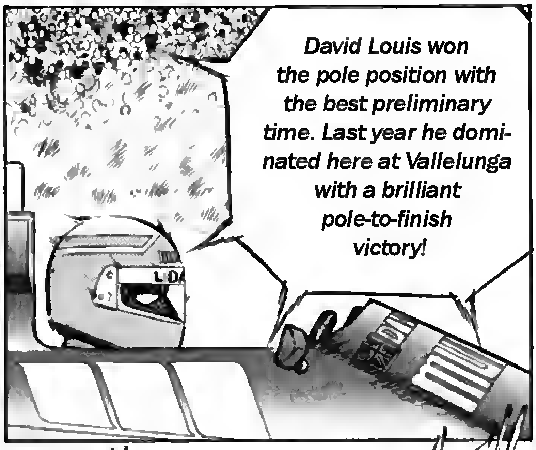
We'll have to wait for the official time, but he'll be ranking pretty low.
7.21 seconds... Phew... I think he'll barely qualify with that.

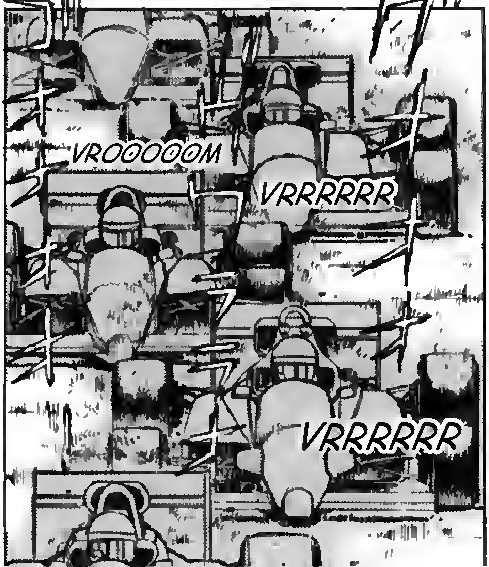



Agip
Agip

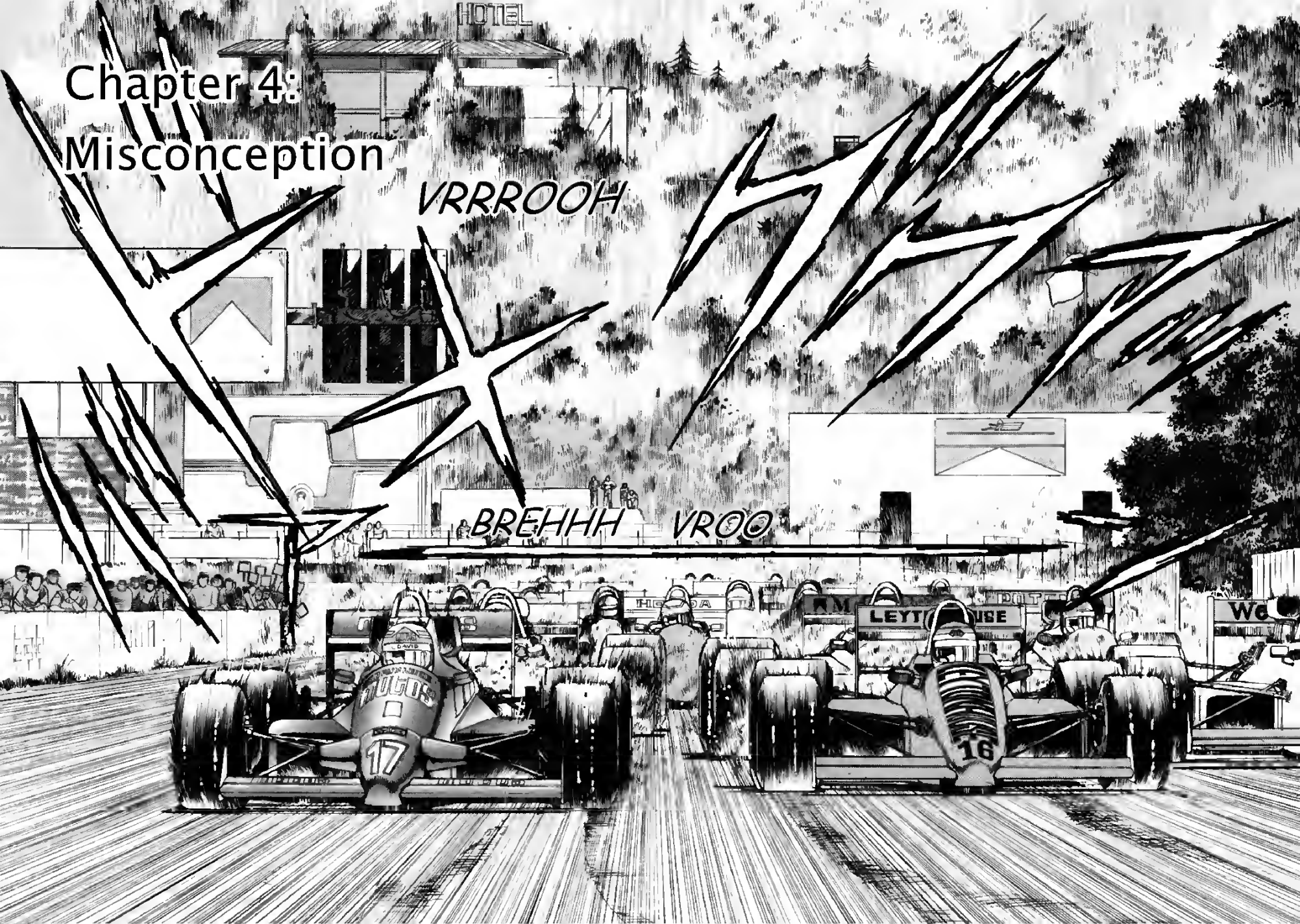
Anyway, David got the pole position, so we're in good shape.
Right, Davey?
If I may speak for the press, we had very high hopes for him. Why did he get out of his car during the race?
Pretty bad. Gunma ranked 15th in the preliminary.
The Japanese are a mystery to me.
YAK
YAK
YAK
GLARE
Listen up, journos!
I don't know. He drove well at Silverstone.
He did great for a Japanese chap. We can't expect any better from him!
I think Gunma tried his best. Don't you?
I think I'll turn in for the night. Tomorrow's the big race, after all. Ha ha ha...
I can't argue with you there.
It'll take years for them to handle these tools correctly!
The Japanese are a very cunning people, stealing our technology to make high-performance engines. But it's simply an imitation, not a culture by any means! Culture is defined by deep roots!

SHAAAA
PSHEEEEH
I'm sorry, Gunma...
Gunma dying in a race will be less painful for Sako...
...than being betrayed by him.
If I tamper with the radiator hose...
...Gunma's car will burst into flames.
Canon
Mobil

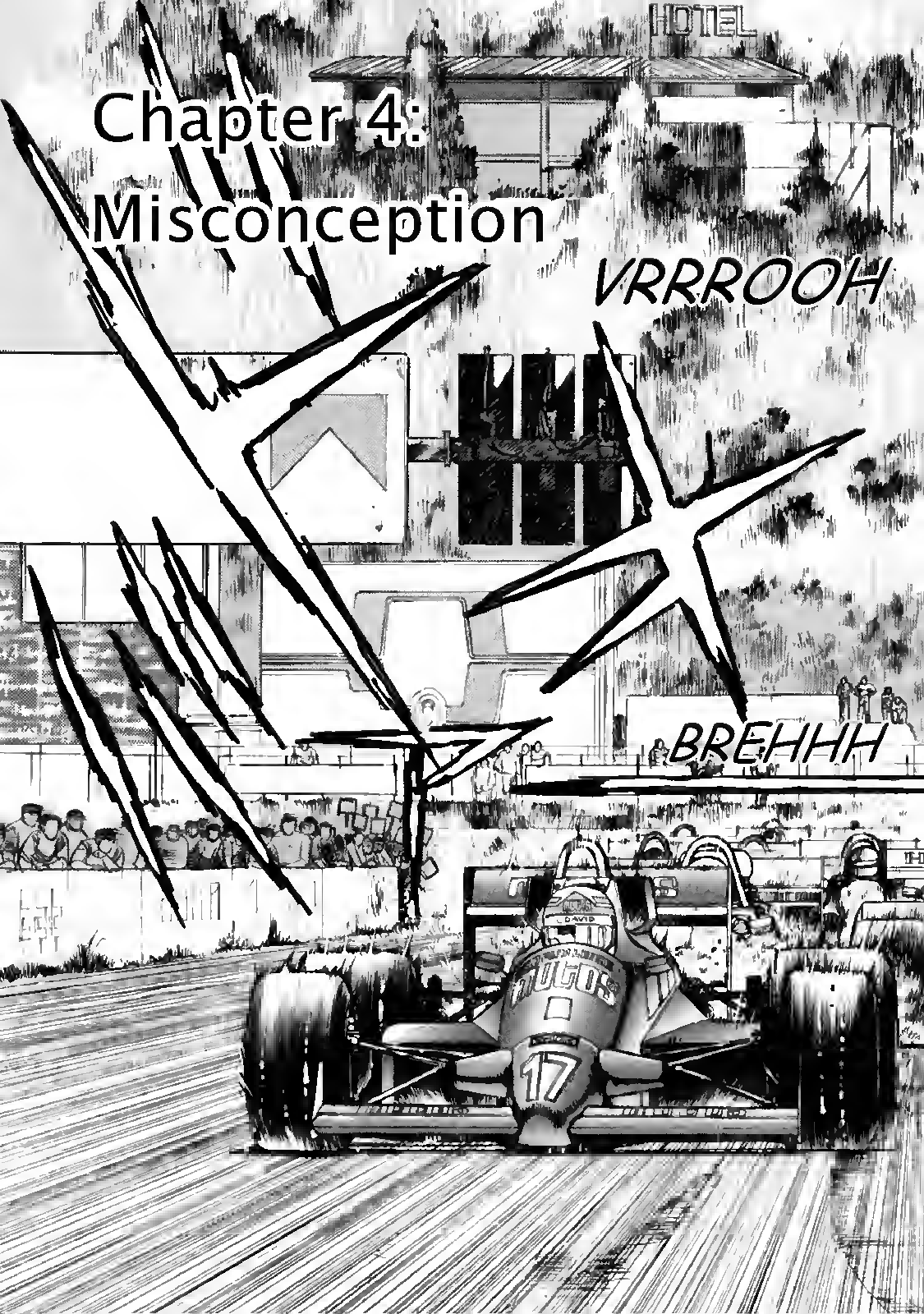

David Louis won the pole position with the best preliminary time. Last year he dominated here at Vallelunga with a brilliant pole-to-finish victory!

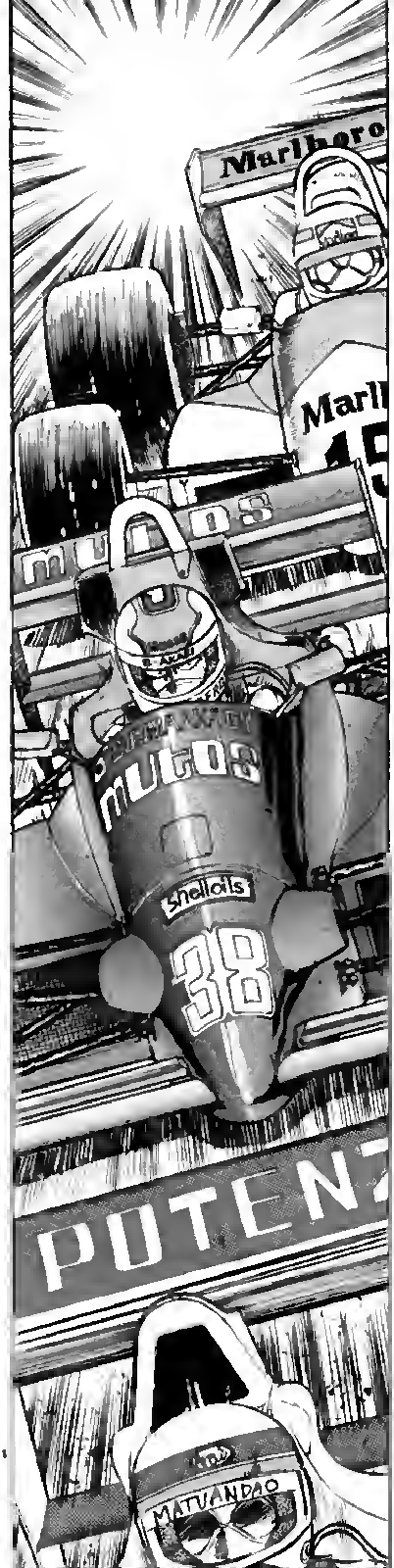


This is a work of fiction. Any resemblance to actual events, locales, or persons is entirely coincidental.


Chapter 4:
Misconception
VRRROOH
BREHHH
VROO
HOTEL
17
16

VROO
16

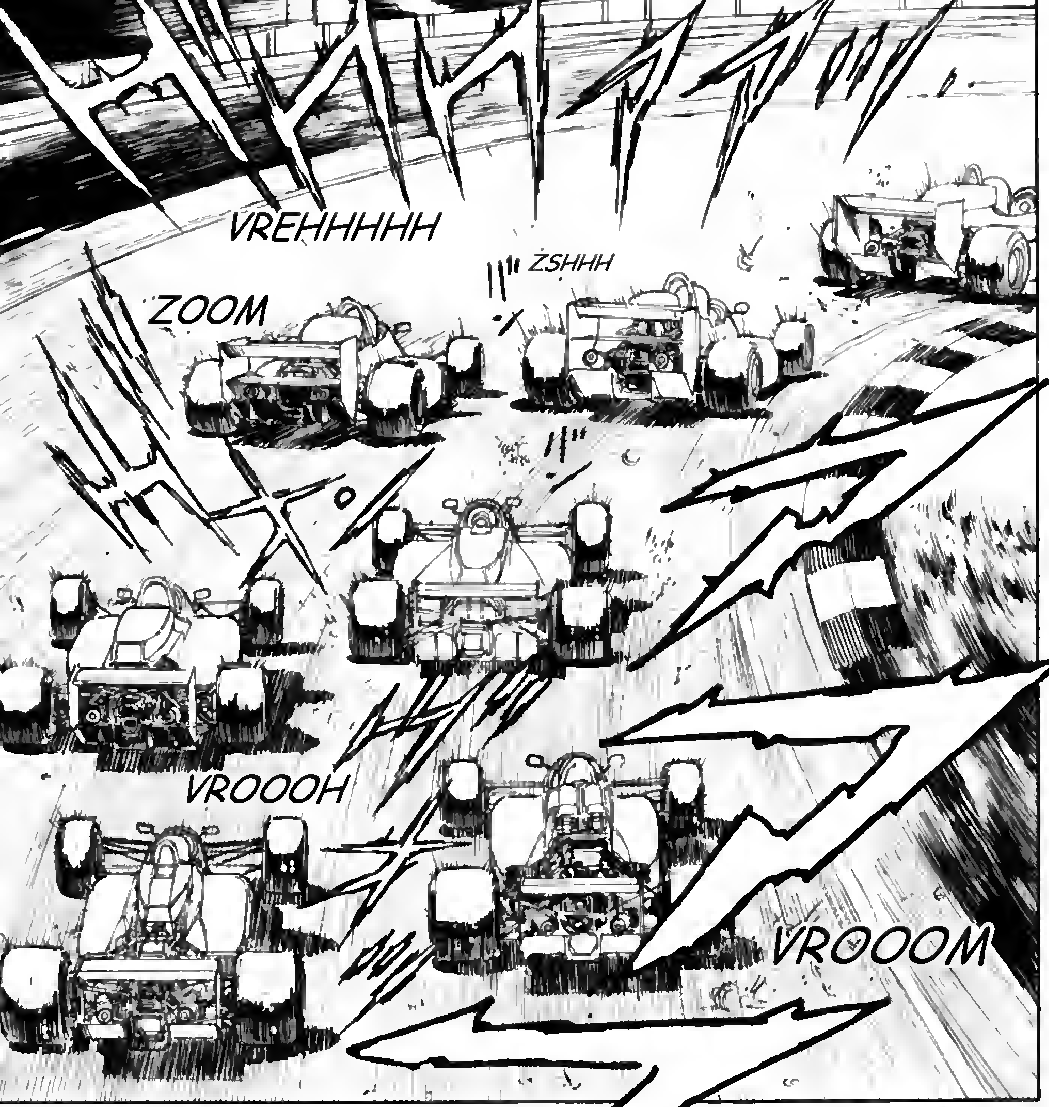

Chapter 4:
Misconception
HOTEL
VRRROOH
BREHHH
17

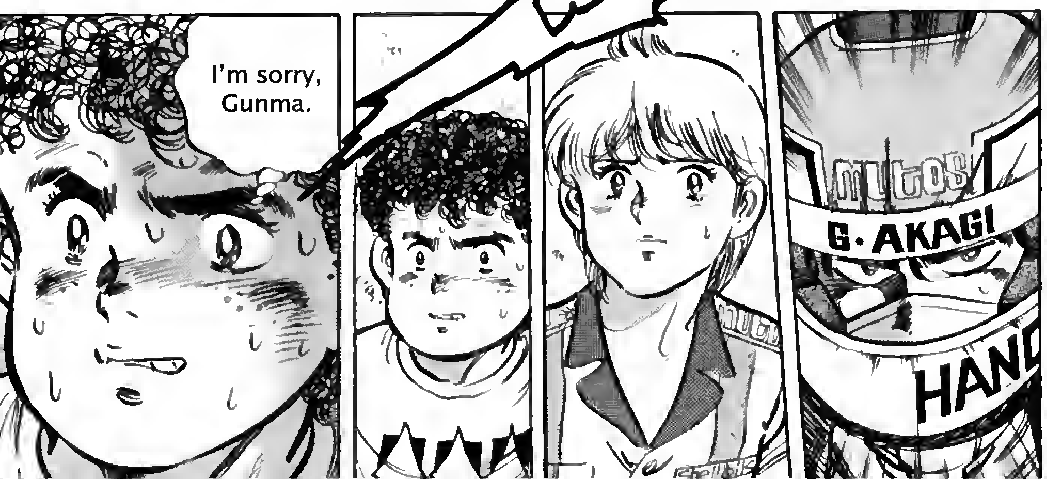


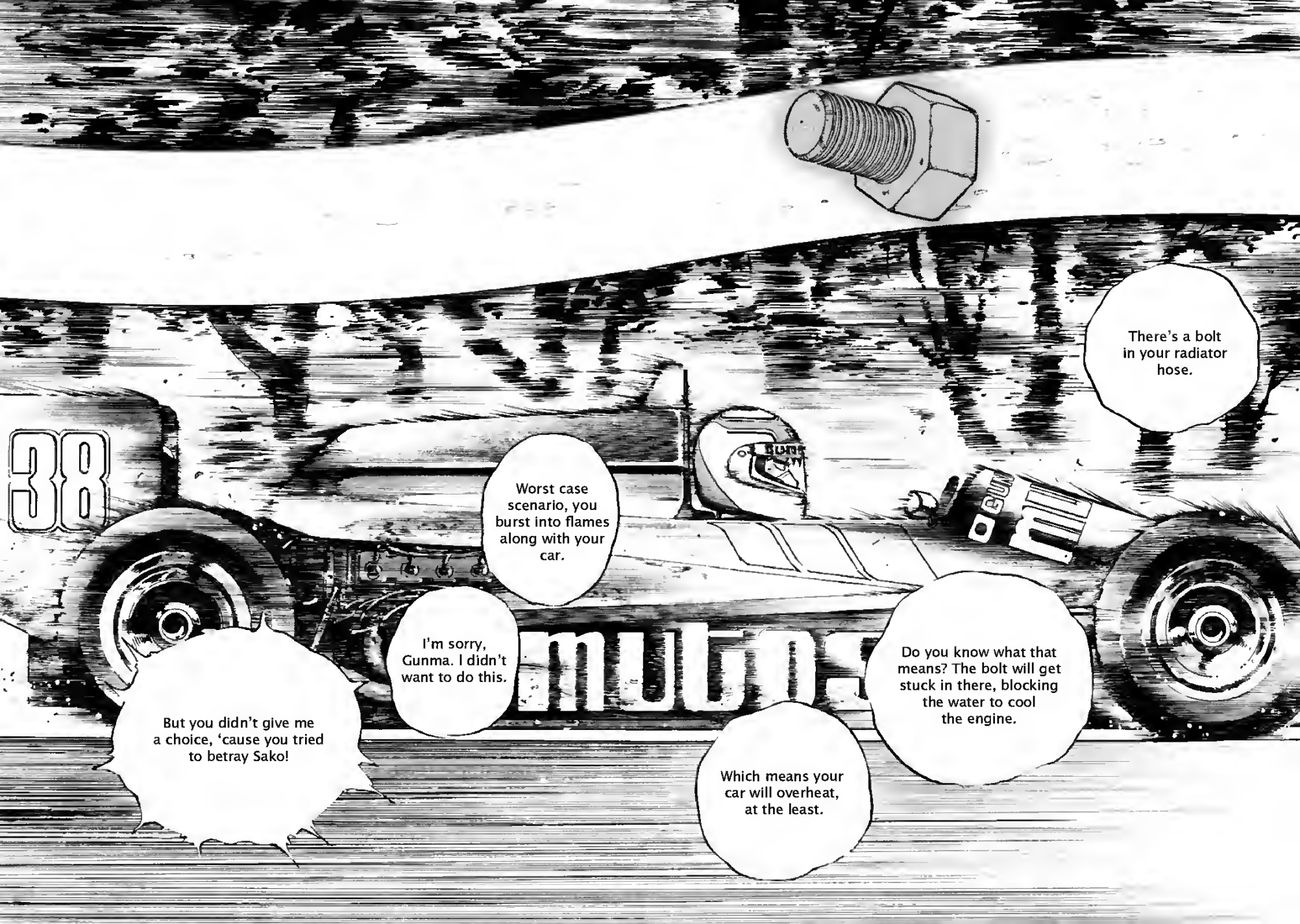
ZOOOOOM

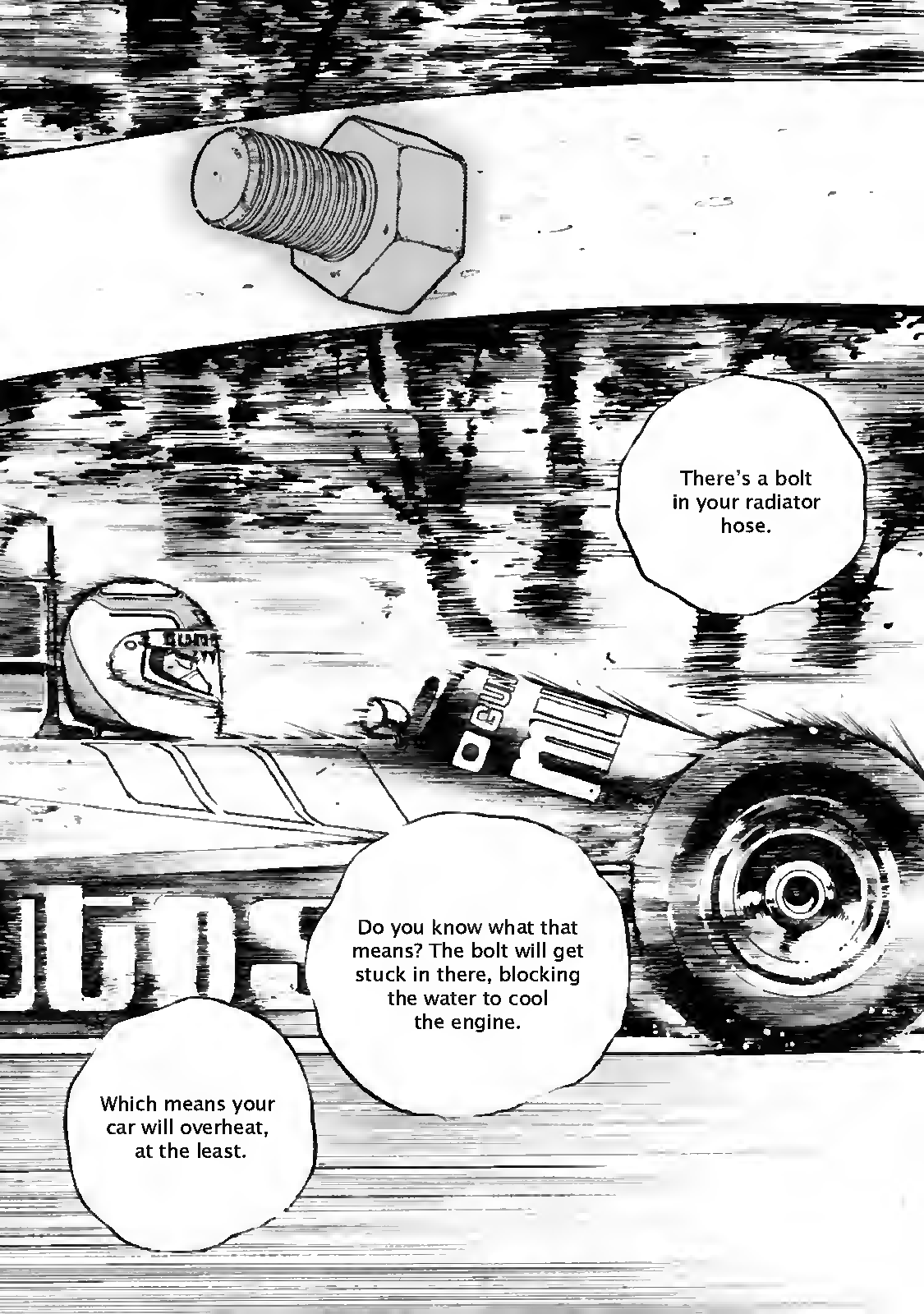
VROOH

All cars are off to a great start!


VREHHHHH
ZSHHH
ZOOM
VROOOH
VROOOM

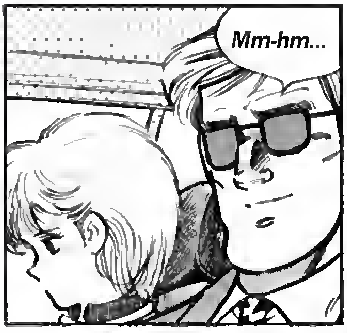

I'm sorry, Gunma.
G·AKAGI

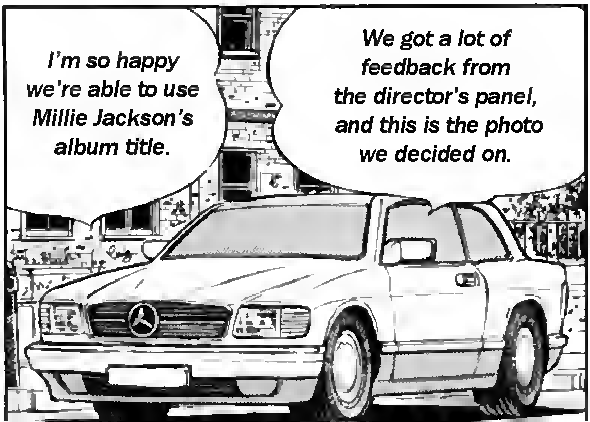

38
There's a bolt in your radiator hose.
Worst case scenario, you burst into flames along with your car.
I'm sorry, Gunma. I didn't want to do this.
But you didn't give me a choice, 'cause you tried to betray Sako!
Do you know what that means? The bolt will get stuck in there, blocking the water to cool the engine.
Which means your car will overheat, at the least.


There's a bolt in your radiator hose.
Do you know what that means? The bolt will get stuck in there, blocking the water to cool the engine.
Which means your car will overheat, at the least.

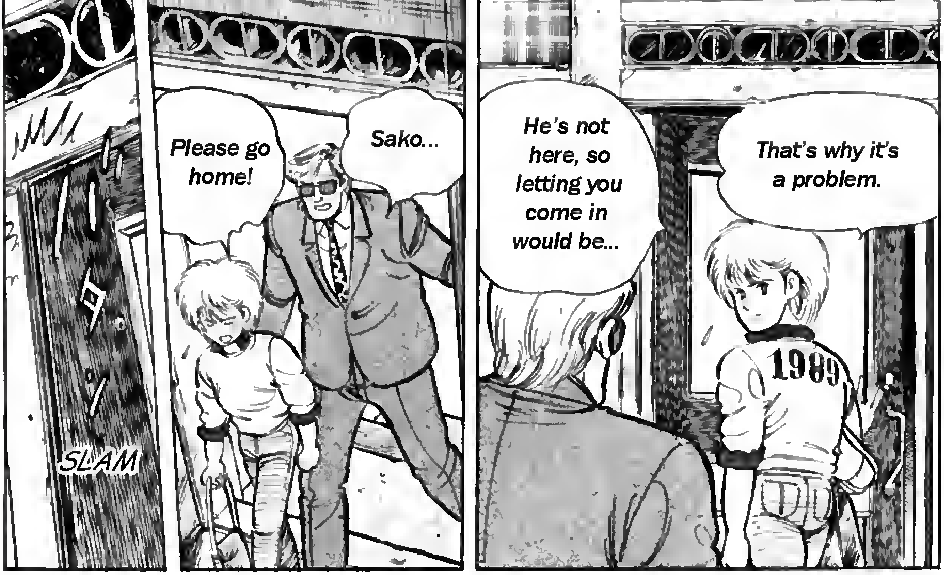
38
But you didn't give me a choice, 'cause you tried to betray Sako!
I'm sorry, Gunma. I didn't want to do this.
Worst case scenario, you burst into flames along with your car.

LONDON
CAUGHT UP


Mm-hm...


I'm so happy we're able to use Millie Jackson's album title.
We got a lot of feedback from the director's panel, and this is the photo we decided on.

This is where it gets tough.
Prisoner of Love...
We're presenting you as an Asian star, with a fusion of black soul and London street vibes.The company's really excited about that.
KACHUK
1989
Your schedule is jam-packed with TV and radio appearances to promote the album.
And you'll have to do two or three live performances.
But I'd rather stay with you a bit longer.
Of course. We've got no plans today.
What about today? Can I go home?
1989
What's the problem? He's not home anyway, right?
George...
1989
To discuss what we'll be doing in the future. Can't I come in for a bit?
SLAM

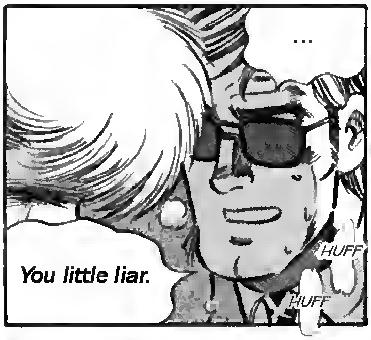

Please go home!
Sako...
SLAM
He's not here, so letting you come in would be...
That's why it's a problem.
1989

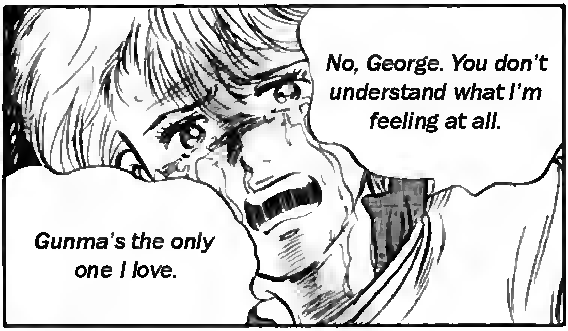
Don't pretend to be innocent. I've already shagged you once.
Just as I expected, you came knocking at my hotel room door that night.
Hey... What are you... Stop it...!

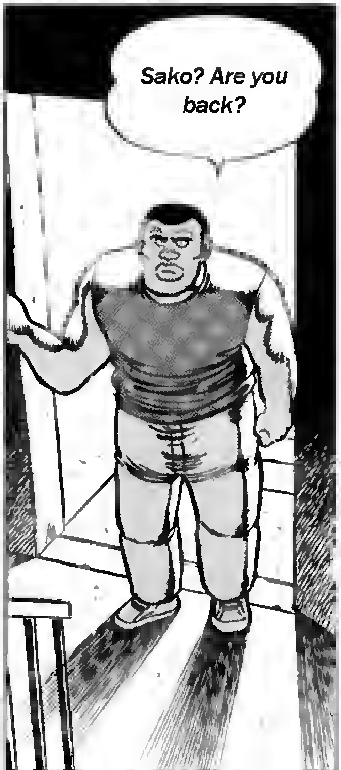
Weren't you listening to a word I said!?
How dare you! I went to your room that night to complain!
1989
Stop it, you jerk! Someone's coming!
Then let me in.
1989

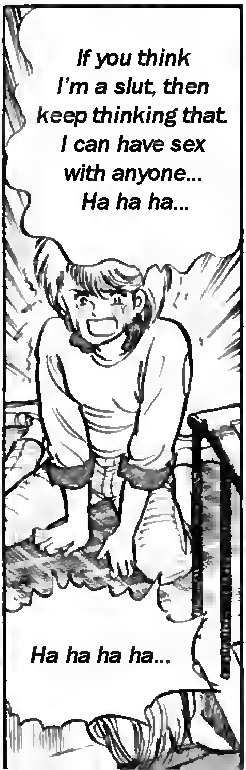
Right. I forced myself on you.
At first you were struggling to escape...
Then you grabbed me and...
Don't be ridiculous, George! How can you expect me to have sex in return for my record deal!? Don't treat me like that!
1990
What were you feeling at that time, Sako!?
Stop it!
...but it's as if you remembered our life together, melting in a fit of ecstasy in my arms, and then...
That was... I just..
No!
I'm a powerful man, and an incredible lover!
Yes, you crave what I can give you. I'm your key to success in the music world.
CREAK
CREAK

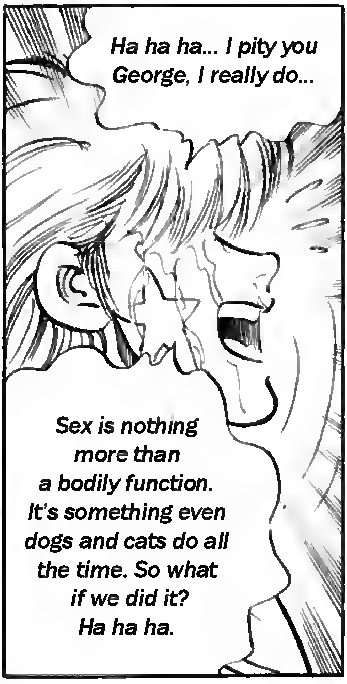
CREAK
But it's true, Sako. That's the kind of woman you are, so don't fight your feelings.
Just go with it, Sako. Go with it, and be honest with yourself.
CREAK


...
You little liar.
HUFF
HUFF


No, George. You don't understand what I'm feeling at all.
Gunma's the only one I love.

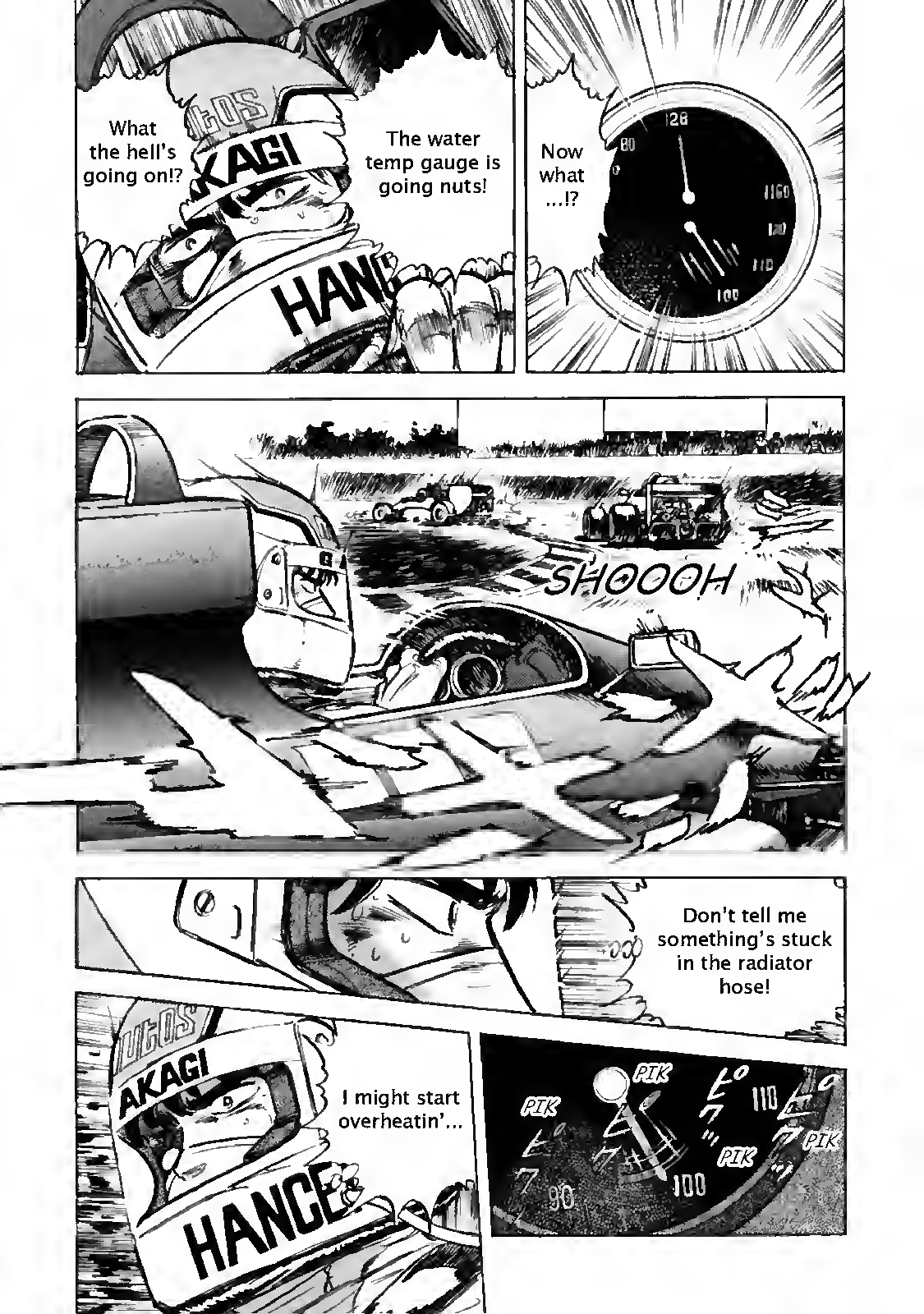

Sako? Are you back?

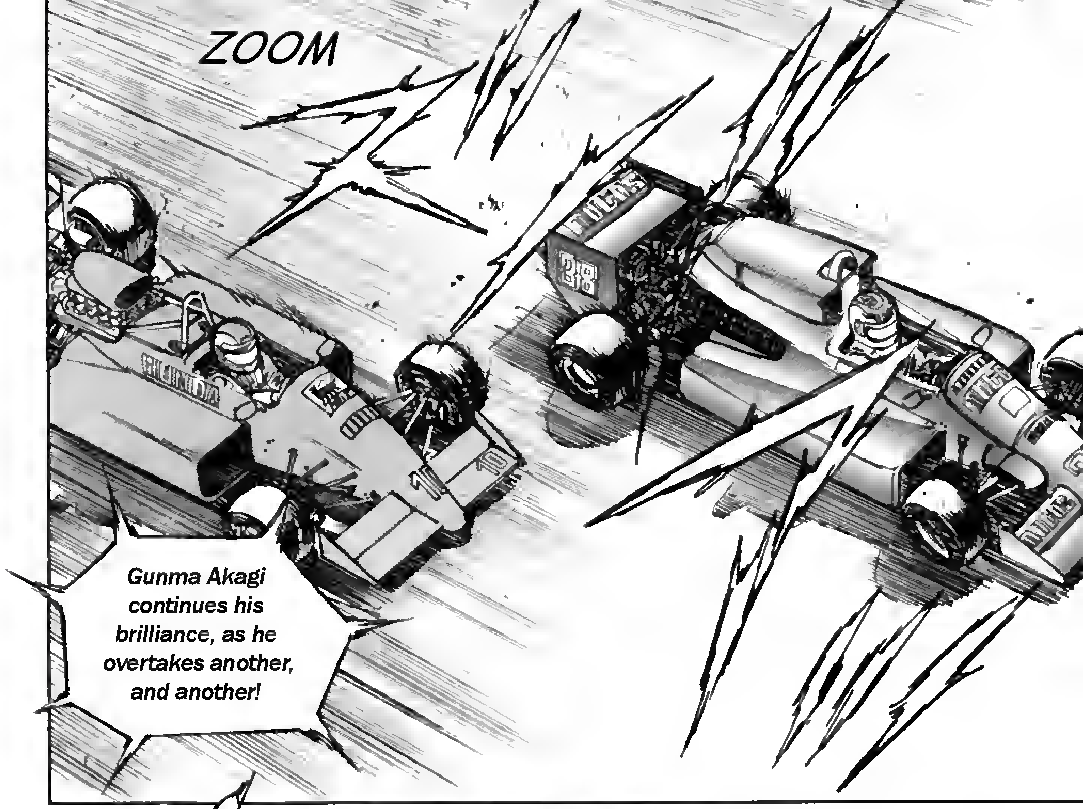

If you think I'm a slut, then keep thinking that. I can have sex with anyone... Ha ha ha...
Ha ha ha ha...

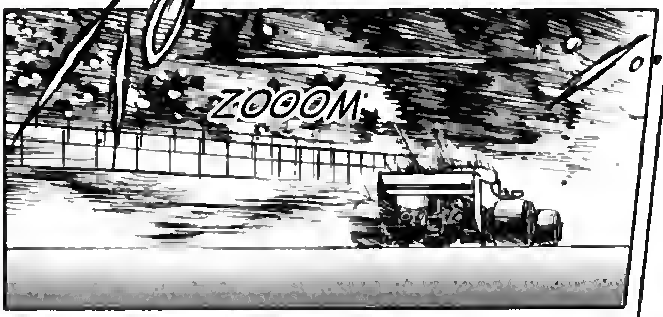

Ha ha ha... I pity you George, I really do...
Sex is nothing more than a bodily function. It's something even dogs and cats do all the time. So what if we did it? Ha ha ha.

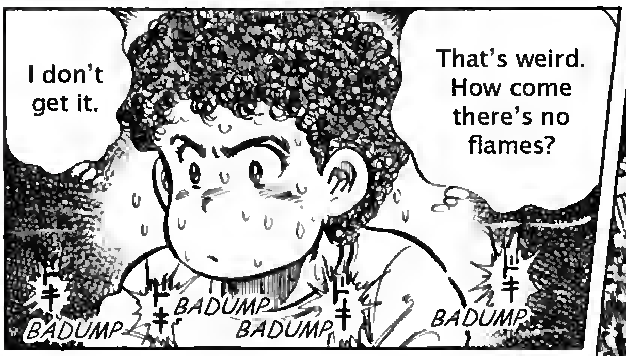
Dammit.
It's Tyson. If he sees you, he'll kill you.
CREAK
Sako!
When is it, and which record company?
Long time no see, love. I heard about your debut!
Tyson...
!
Huh!?
You showed up just in time. I'm so horny right now...
Let's do it, right now.

VROOOOOOH
ZOOOOOM
Look at Hans Racing's Gunma Akagi! He's making an incredible run!
He started in the 15th spot, but he's already worked his way up to seventh place! It's Silverstone all over again!
He's getting faster by the lap!
But look at Gunma go!
David's not at his best, it seems. He's barely holding on to first position...
I don't care. We stick with the strategy!
Gunma's clearly putting up better times!
But Hans...
Don't forget he's our second driver! His job is to move up in position and support David!


What the hell's going on!?
The water temp gauge is going nuts!
Now what ...!?
SHOOOH
Don't tell me something's stuck in the radiator hose!
I might start overheatin'...
AKAGI
HANCE

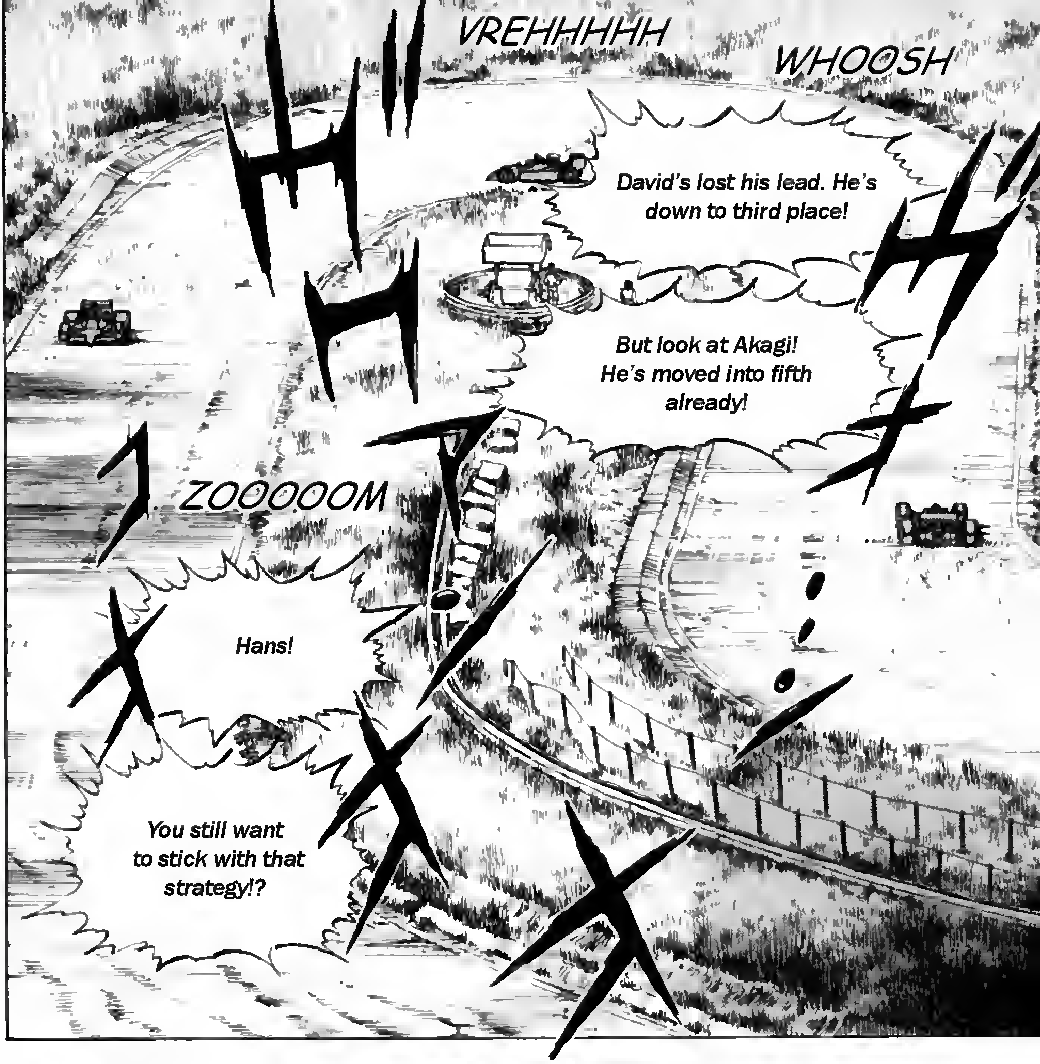

ZOOM
Gunma Akagi continues his brilliance, as he overtakes another, and another!


ZOOOM


I don't get it.
That's weird. How come there's no flames?
BADUMP
BADUMP
BADUMP
BADUMP

SHEEN
WOOHOO

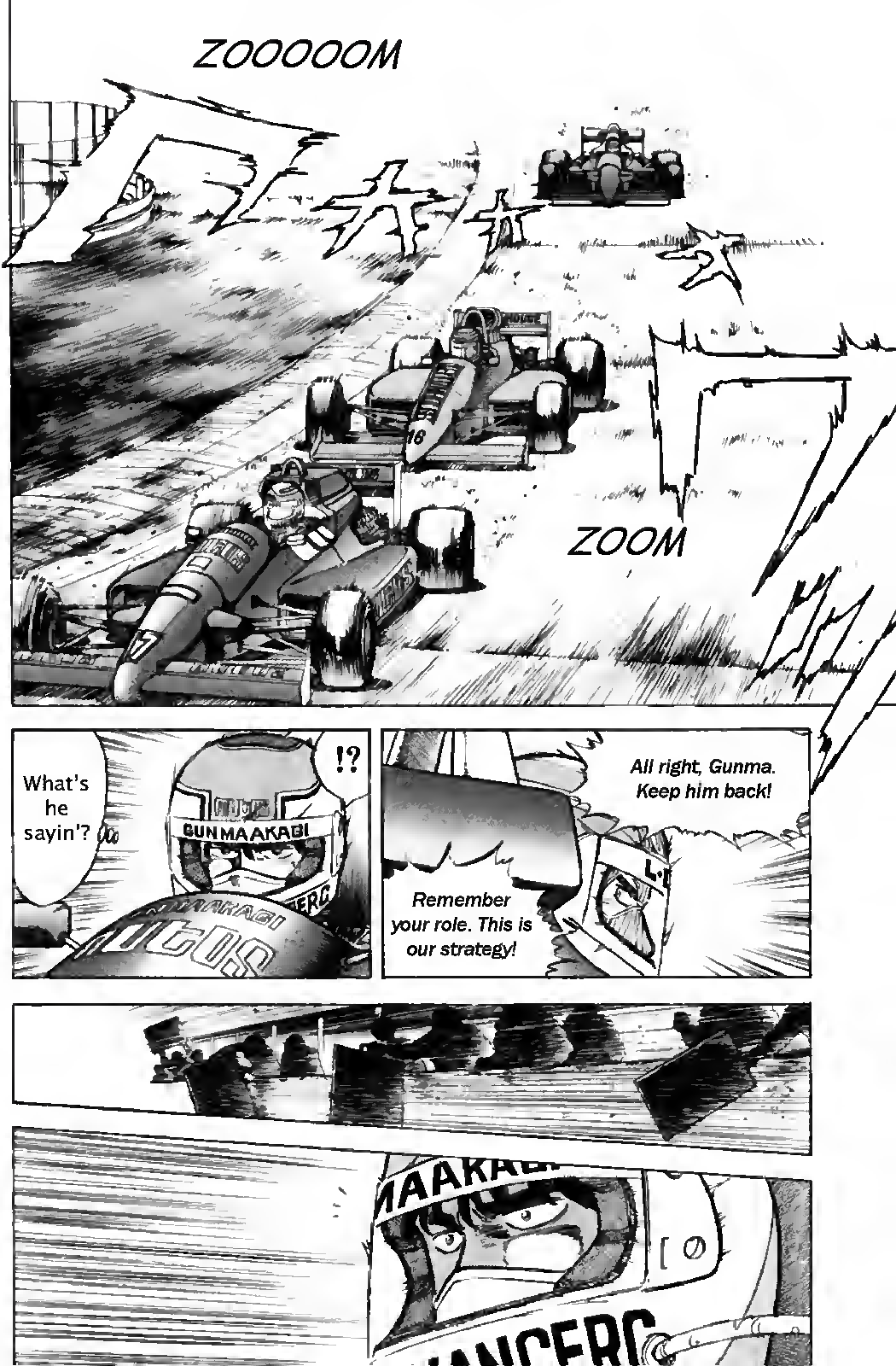
Chapter 5: Endurance


VREHHHHH
WHOOSH
David's lost his lead. He's down to third place!
But look at Akagi! He's moved into fifth already!
ZOOOOOM
Hans!
You still want to stick with that strategy!?

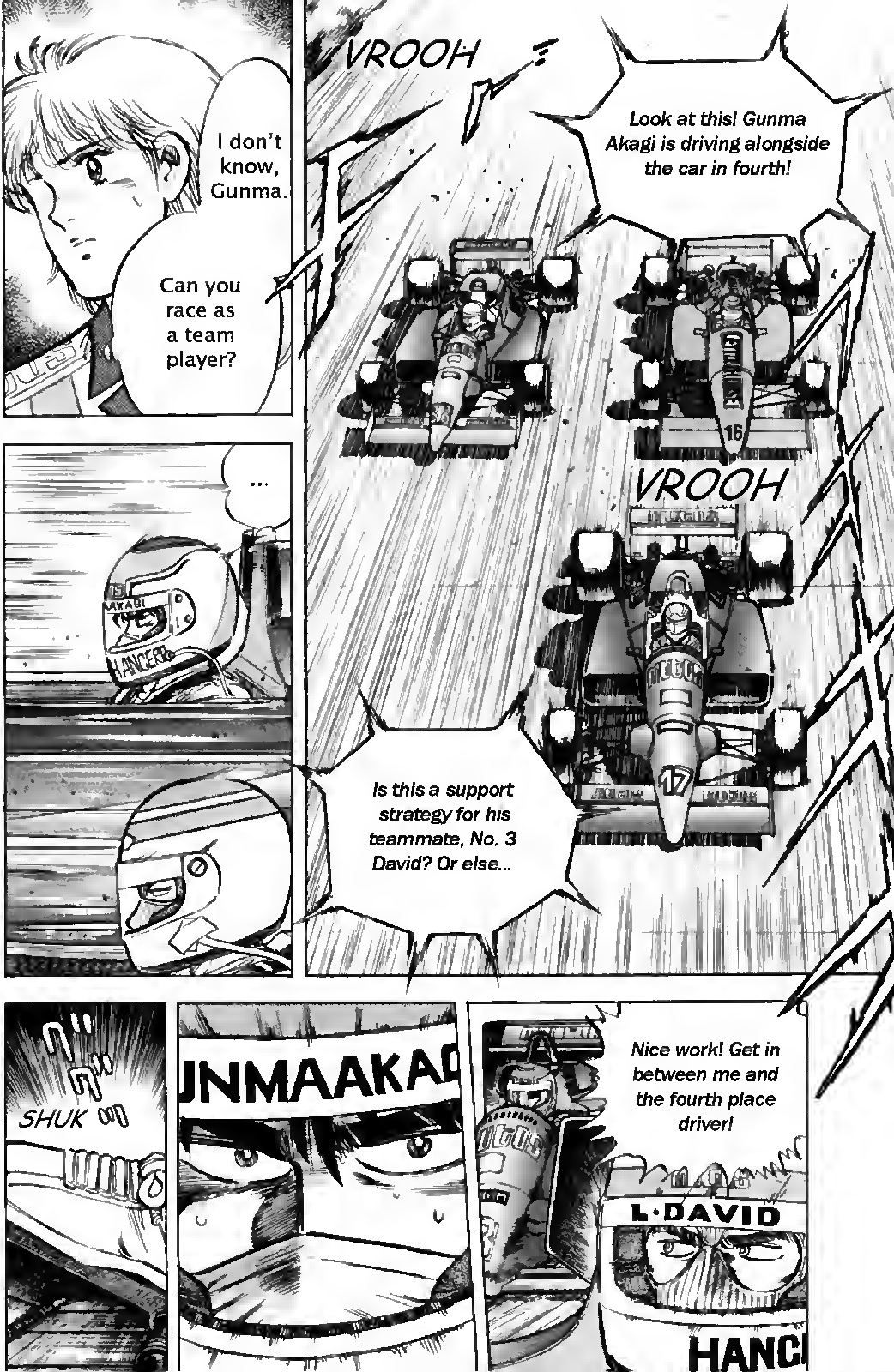
I...
Very well...
Of course I do. Have Akagi support David to make it an easier run for him!

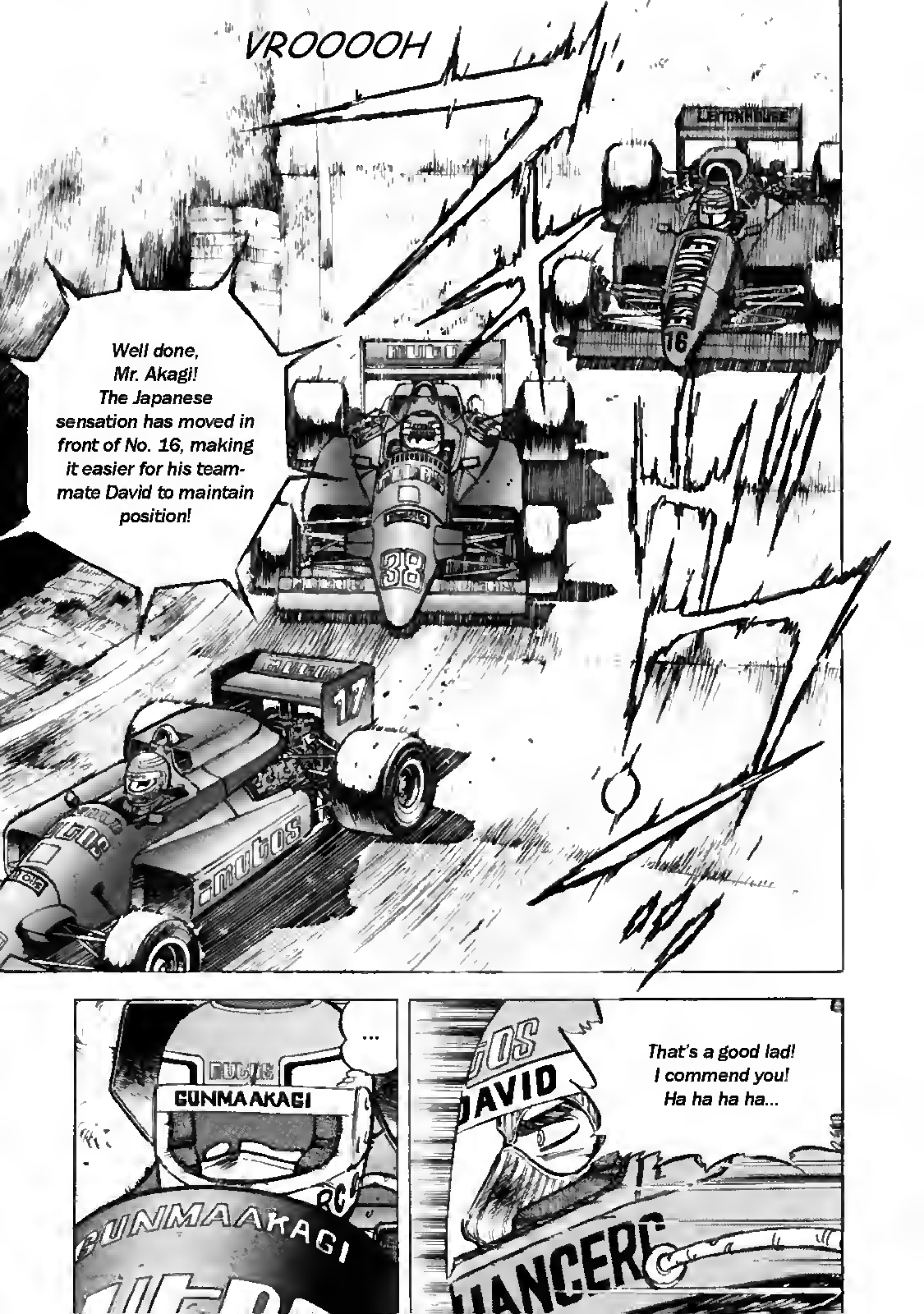
...

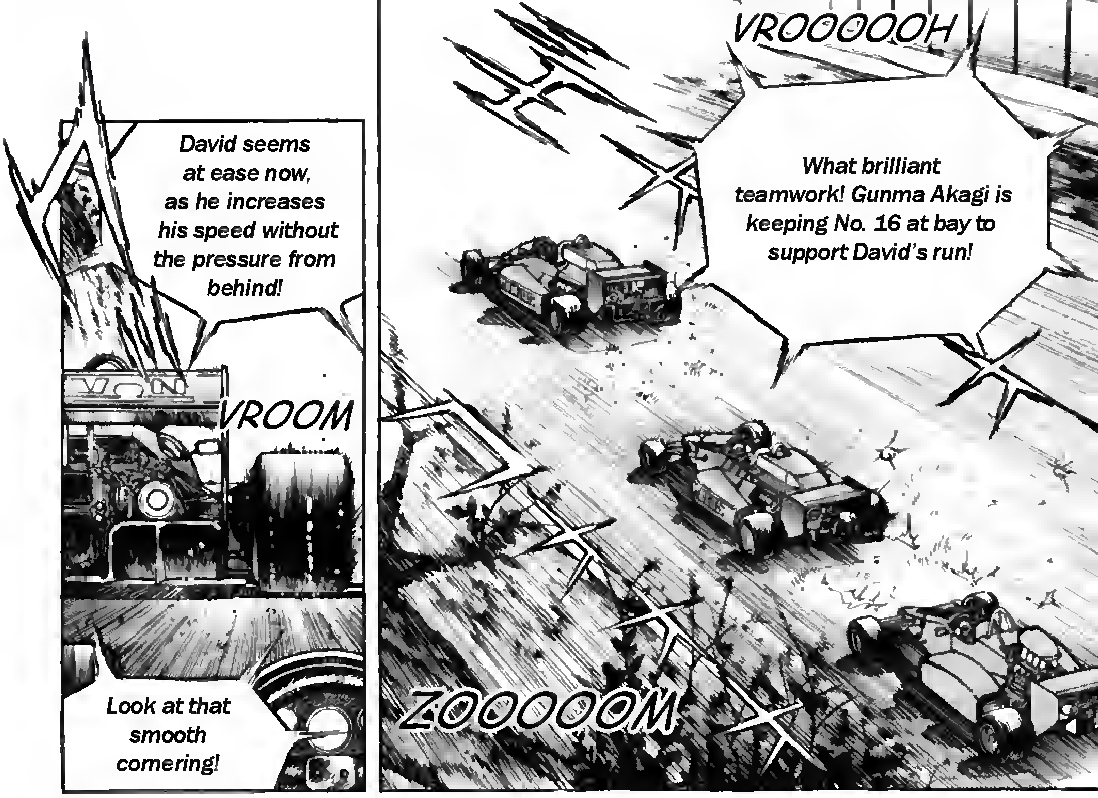
VRROOM
VROOM
Found you, Davey.
I'm in fifth, he's in third.
Aha!
SUNMAAKAGI
Dammit.
He's trying to overtake me.
But it looks like he's strugglin' out here. The guy in fourth is right on his ass.
L·DAVID
Huh?
This is bad. I can't slip any further!
How the hell did he move up so close from the 15th spot!?
That's Akagi on his tail!

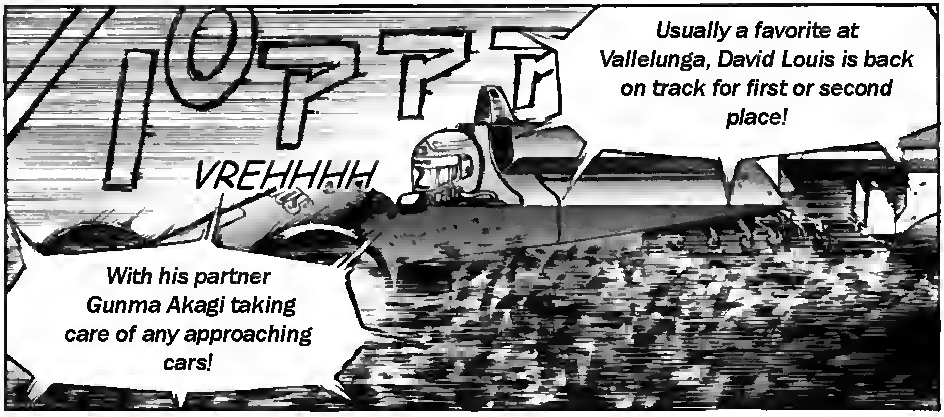

ZOOOOOM
ZOOM
What's he sayin'?
!?
GUNMA AKABI
All right, Gunma. Keep him back!
Remember your role. This is our strategy!

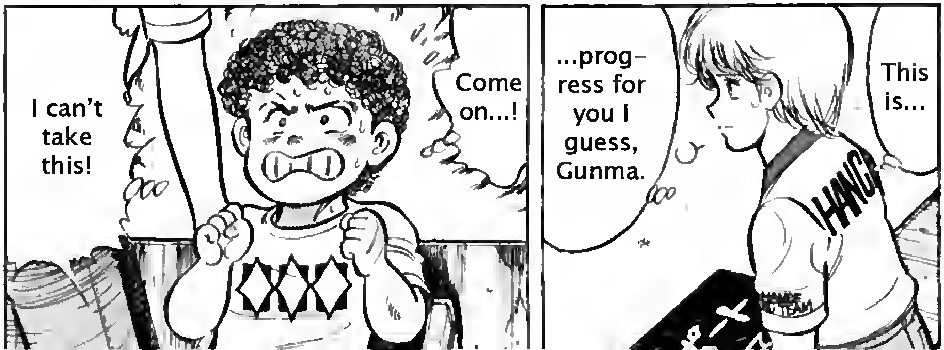
VREHHH
デビをSupport David!
サポートして!!
I passed so many cars to get here, and now they tell me this!?
Dude ...
ON
Dam-mit.
110
100
I'm on edge here with my water temp gauge goin' all over the place!
VROOM
ガーーーーッ!!


I don't know, Gunma.
Can you race as a team player?
VROOH
Look at this! Gunma Akagi is driving alongside the car in fourth!
VROOH
...
Is this a support strategy for his teammate, No. 3 David? Or else...
SHUK
Nice work! Get in between me and the fourth place driver!
L·DAVID


VROOOOH
Well done, Mr. Akagi! The Japanese sensation has moved in front of No. 16, making it easier for his team-mate David to maintain position!
16
38
17
GUNMA AKAGI
...
That's a good lad! I commend you! Ha ha ha ha...
DAVID


David seems at ease now, as he increases his speed without the pressure from behind!
VROOM
Look at that smooth cornering!
VROOOOOH
What brilliant teamwork! Gunma Akagi is keeping No. 16 at bay to support David's run!
ZOOOOOM


Usually a favorite at Vallelunga, David Louis is back on track for first or second place!
VREHHHH
With his partner Gunma Akagi taking care of any approaching cars!


I can't take this!
Come on...!
...prog-ress for you I guess, Gunma.
This is...

What if... And this is just a what if... Something gets stuck in the radiator hose, and the engine can't cool down?
What is it, lad?
Hey mister, can I ask you a question?
What's the question again? Make it quick, I'm busy.
Well, it's a problem I'm having with my old 2CV...
That's quite a big question for a young boy like yourself.
Not in a million years, boy. The worst that can happen is the car overheats and shuts down.
Ha ha ha ha...
Basically, if the engine won't cool, it heats up, makes a huge explosion, and the car goes up in flames, and...
How come!?
That could very well happen to an old junker 2CV, but almost never with a race car.
...

Okay...
...but radiator trouble would never start a fire!
Flames are a race car's worst enemy. If a fuel leak somewhere in the car gets sparked, that's a different story...
And it's hilarious that you'd expect a huge explosion!
I'm impressed with Gunma today. He's playing his role as second driver to a tee.
What's his time difference with the second place guy?
Here he comes! David's back to his old self!
!?
This really sucks.
There won't even be any flames.
Gunma's not gonna explode.
What are you so sad about?

We just have to wait it out.
He's red hot right now!
VROOH
That's not true, Peabow.
...
That's not what I meant...
David's back in second place! Within striking distance of the top spot!
VOOOOOOM
...

What is this sudden turn of luck?
You want to have sex...with me?

What are you waiting for? You've asked 375 times, after all!

Sako...
You...

...

Come take me, Tyson. You're sexy in your own special way!

Ooh baby. This has to be a dream...
No big deal.
Just a little casual sex.
Tyson!
I'm in heaven just looking. That's more than enough for me.
Never thought I'd see your nipples up close like this...
DRIP
DRIP

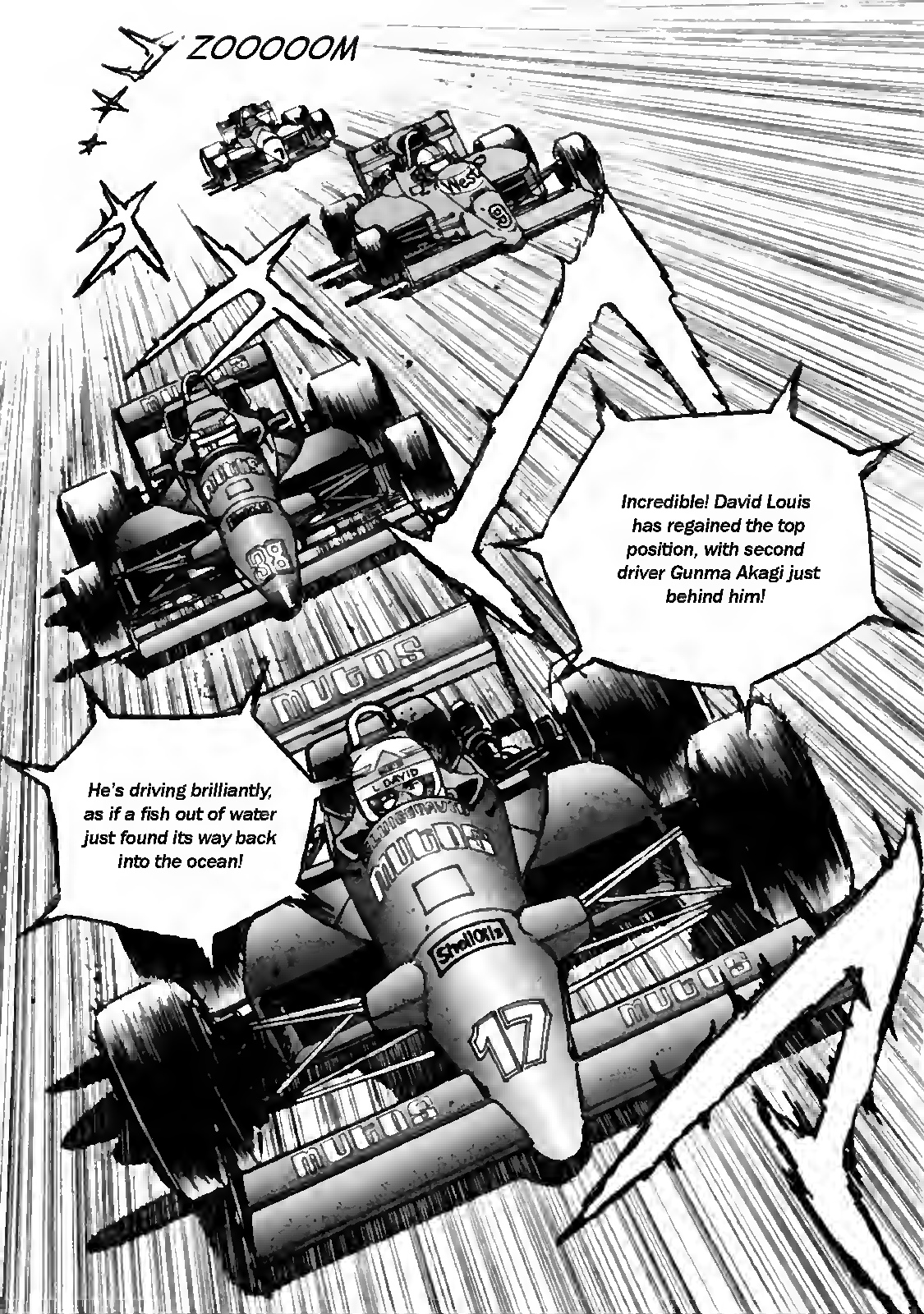
It's just that I can't do it.
What are you saying, Tyson? You don't want me?
Thank you, Sako. I'm a happy man.
Now please, put your clothes back on.
Plus, he's in love with you.
So I can't have sex with you. Okay?
Didn't I tell you? I've got this odd bit of respect for Gunma. And I like the bloke...
You idiot!
Not sure what's gotten into you, but you're usually repulsed by me.
You love Gunma, after all.
Yeah, I suppose I am.
If you love him from the bottom of your heart, you shouldn't be sleeping with another man!

I'm aware of the saying in your country, "It's a poor sort of man who runs away when a woman offers herself to him."
But I've also heard it like this...
Quit talking like a simple-minded child in some fantasy world!
I've got a hot body, I'm naked, and I want you to hump my brains out! Got it?

Ha ha ha ha...
Ha ha ha ha! So you're a samurai? That's what you think of yourself!?
"A samurai pretends he has eaten well when he has no food."

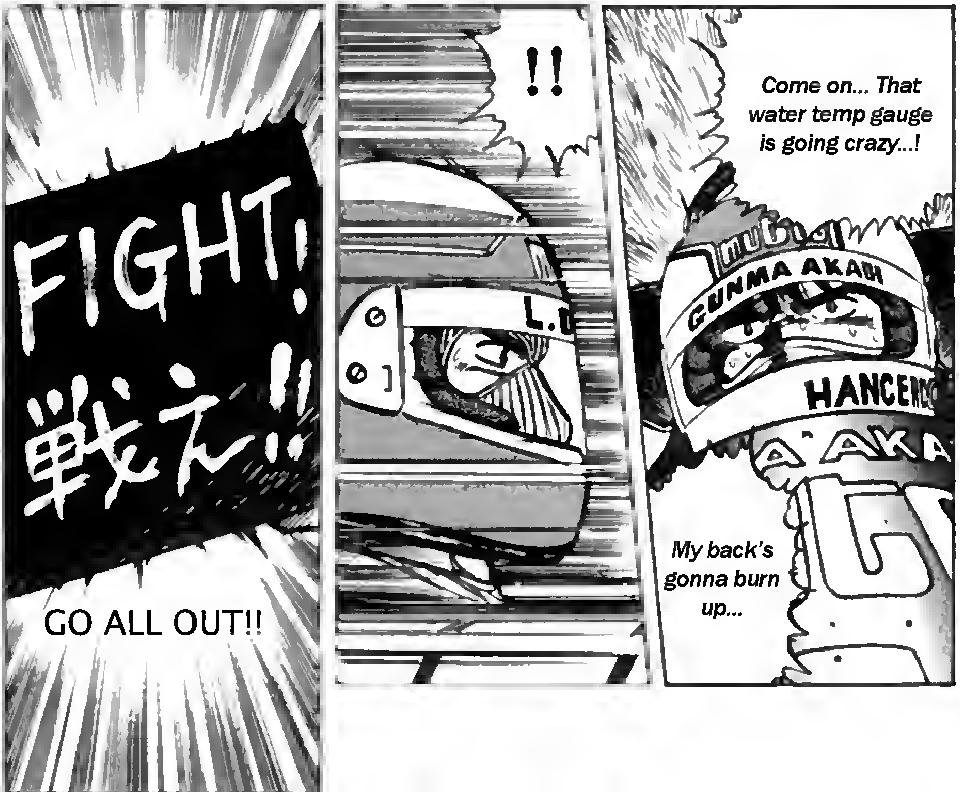
I'll be back, Sako.
SLAM
Get the hell out of here, Tyson! You and your stupid willpower!
Not a samurai but a man!
No matter how much I want you, I've got the willpower to control my lust!

Don't pretend to be some righteous man of the cloth, you jerk!
The willpower to control his lust, he says!
Don't pretend to be innocent. I've already shagged you once.
...but it's as if you remembered our life together, melting in a fit of ecstasy in my arms, and then...
CRASH
What does that make me!?
So then...


ZOOOOOM
Incredible! David Louis has regained the top position, with second driver Gunma Akagi just behind him!
He's driving brilliantly, as if a fish out of water just found its way back into the ocean!
17
Shell Oils
MUGEN

Should we let them race as they please on the last three?
Gunma has been the model second driver up to this point!
Hans!
We're down to the final three laps! If this continues, Hans Team will have secured first and second place finishes!

Right away!
Now this is what I call a race!
Hold up the sign!
Very well. I don't see why not.

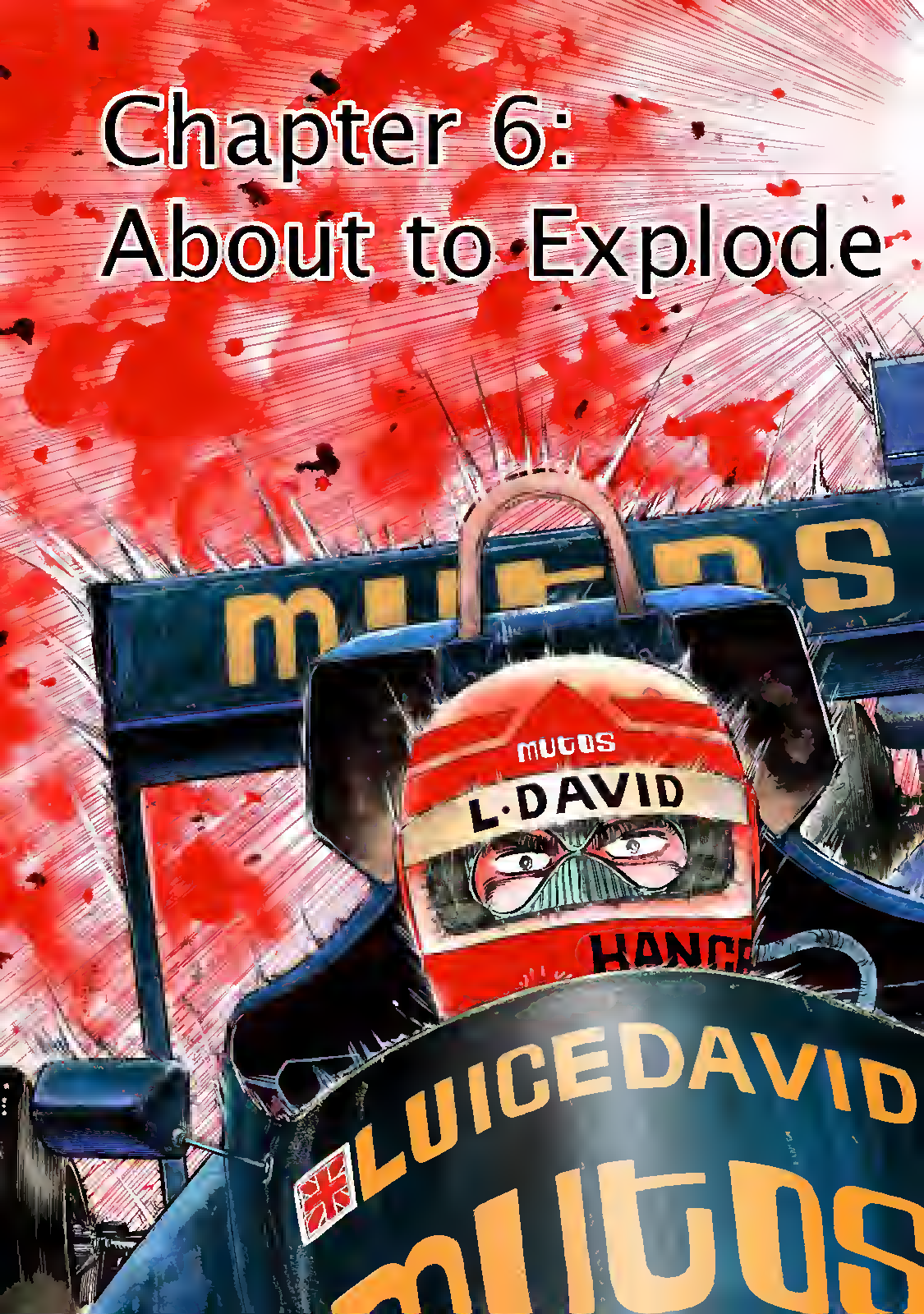

FIGHT!
戦え!!
GO ALL OUT!!
!!
Come on... That water temp gauge is going crazy...!
GUNMA AKABI
My back's gonna burn up...

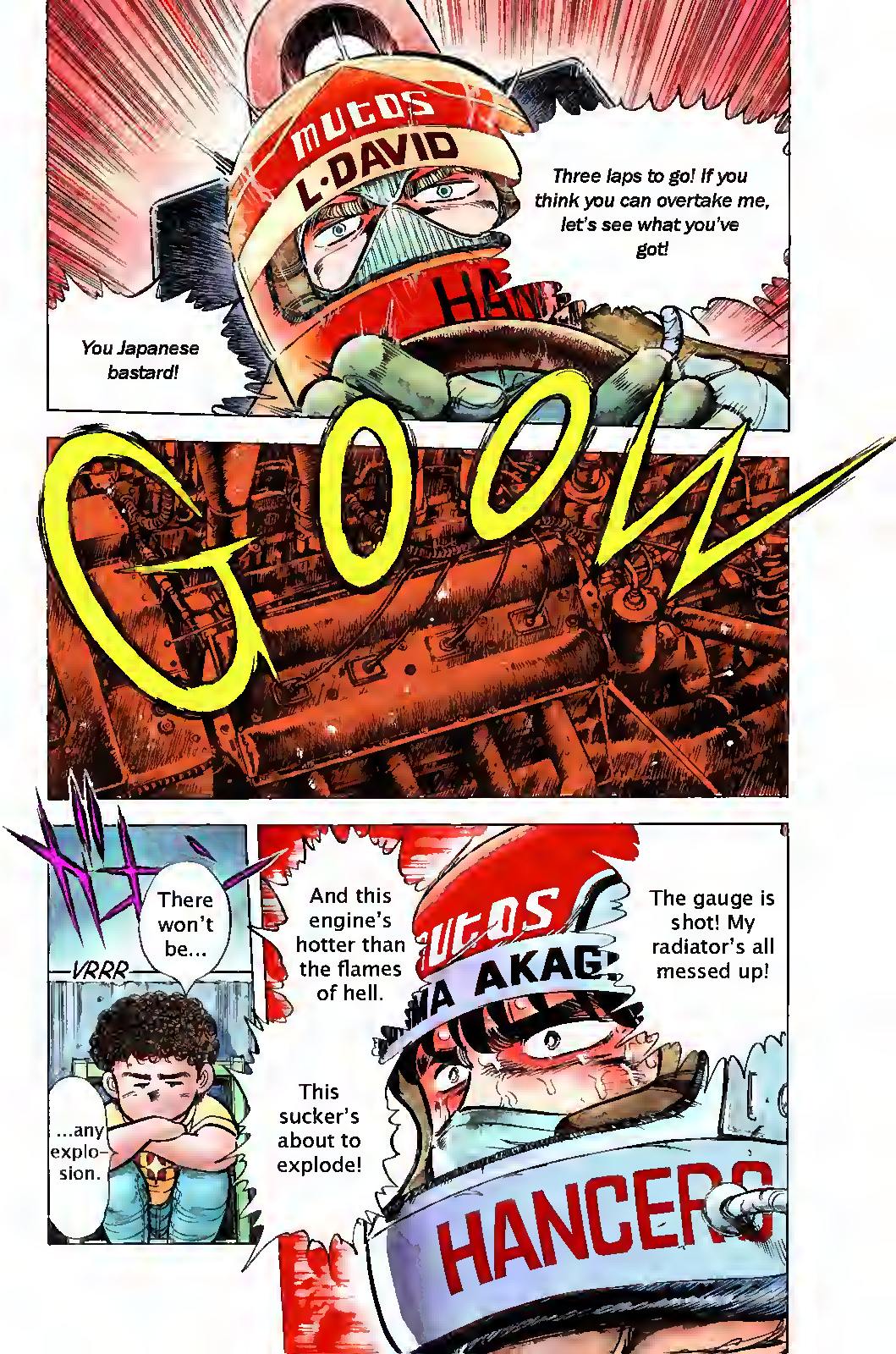
FIGHT!!
戦え!!
GO ALL OUT!!
!!

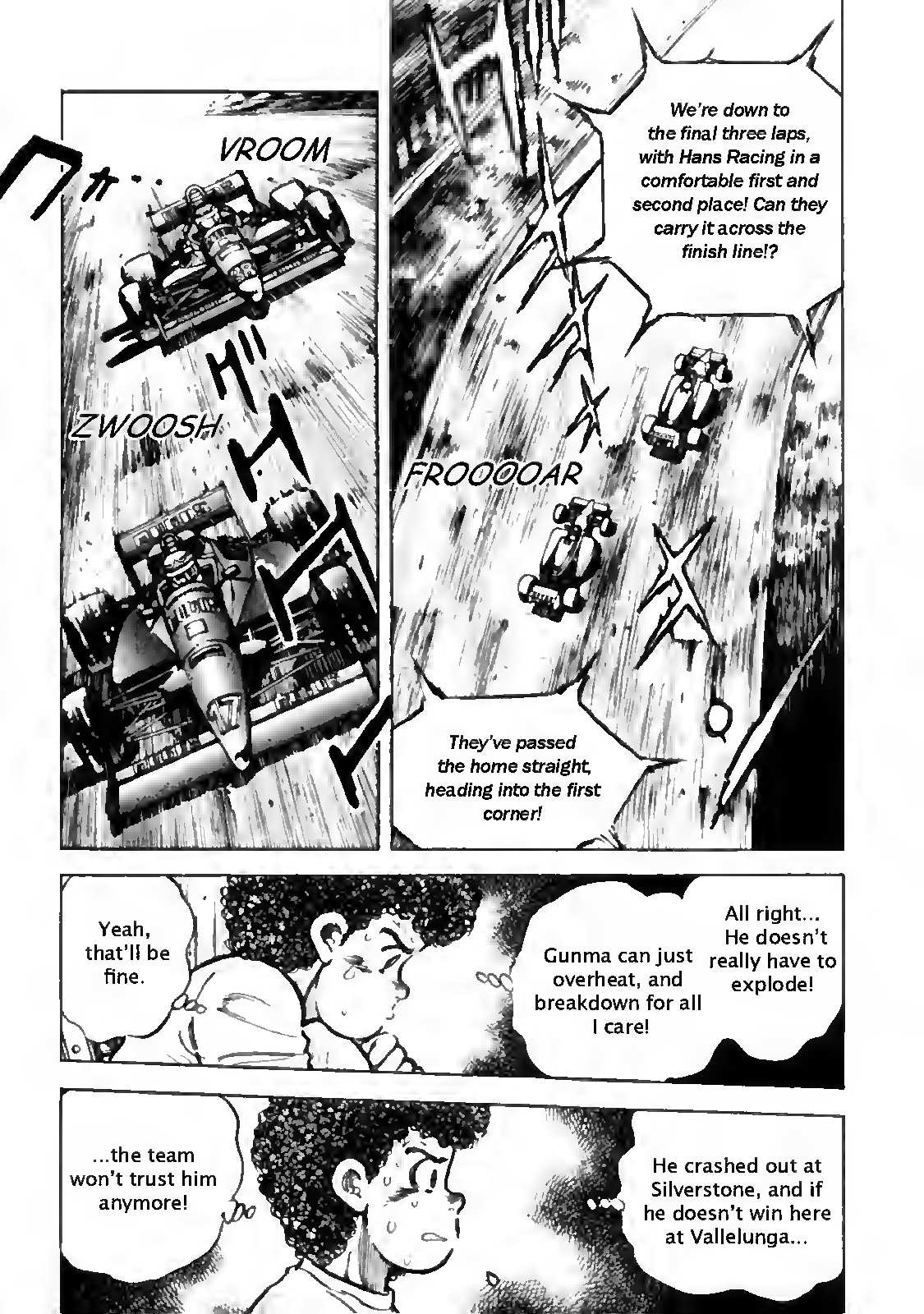
Chapter 6: About to Explode

Finally! All right!
GUNMA AKABI
MUDS

Chapter 6: About to Explode

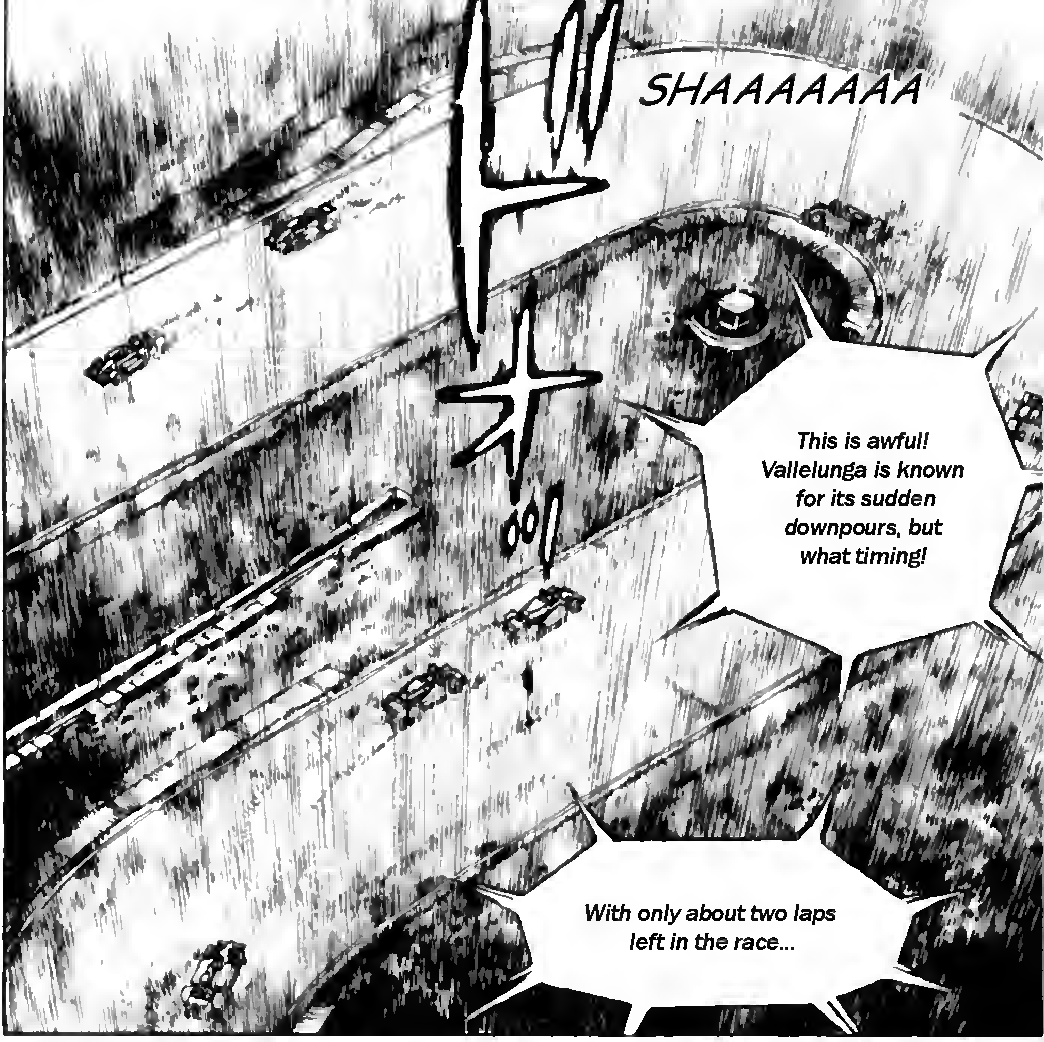



MUTOS
L·DAVID
Three laps to go! If you think you can overtake me, let's see what you've got!
You Japanese bastard!
GOOW
There won't be...
VRRR
...any explo-sion.
And this engine's hotter than the flames of hell.
This sucker's about to explode!
The gauge is shot! My radiator's all messed up!
MUTOS
A AKAG
HANCERS


VROOM
ZWOOSH
We're down to the final three laps, with Hans Racing in a comfortable first and second place! Can they carry it across the finish line!?
FROOOOAR
They've passed the home straight, heading into the first corner!
Yeah, that'll be fine.
Gunma can just overheat, and breakdown for all I care!
All right... He doesn't really have to explode!
...the team won't trust him anymore!
He crashed out at Silverstone, and if he doesn't win here at Vallelunga...

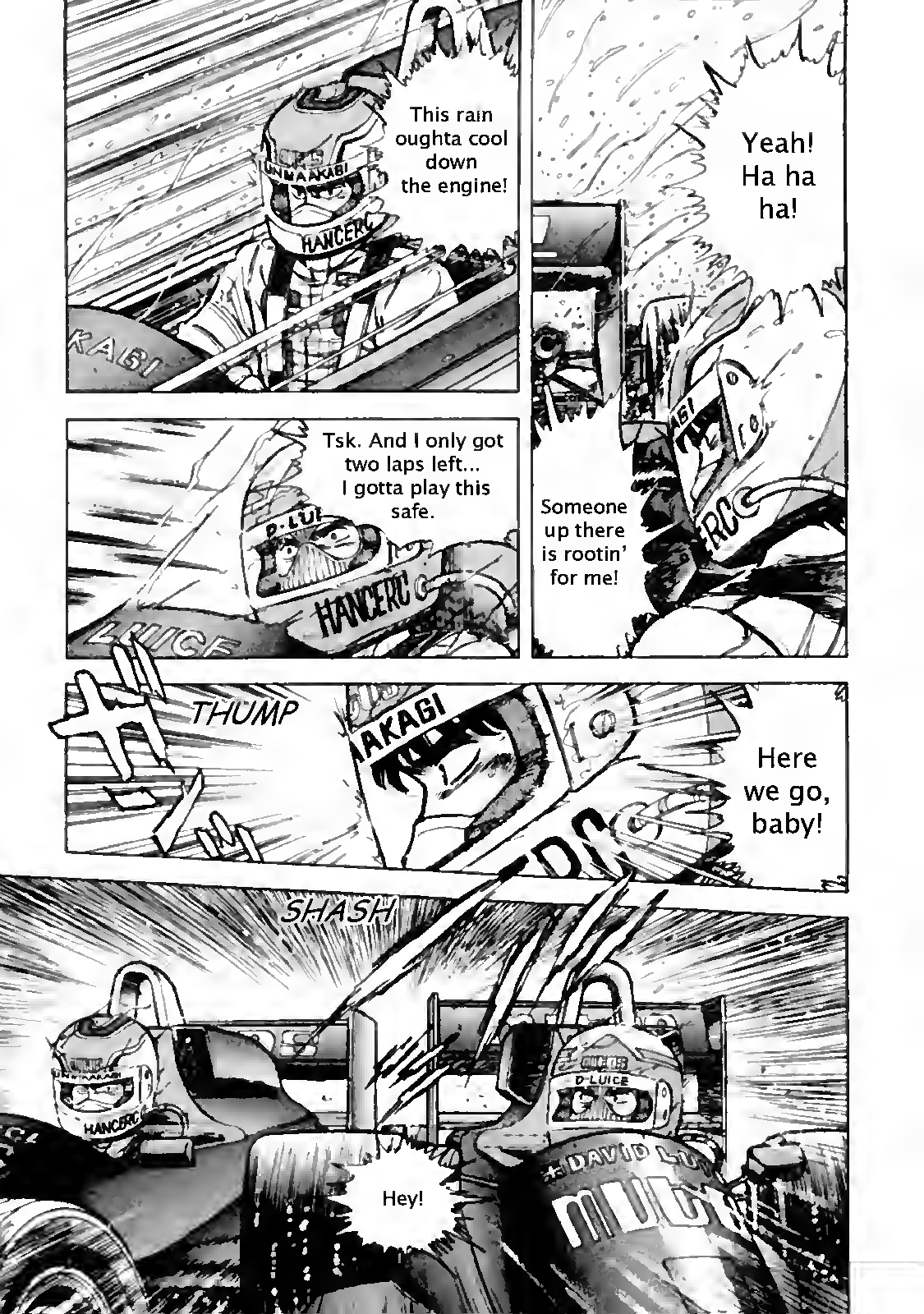
And he won't be seeing this chick anymore!
Just have to get him kicked off the team first.
He'll be kicked off the team...
...then maybe he'll come back to me and Sako!
?
Do your job, little bolt! Mess up that engine!
BLOOP BLOOP
BLOOP
GURGLE
GURGLE
GURGLE
GURGLE
Son of a...!
And I was so close to victory! So close!
I'm done for!
120
110
100
0
Damn it...

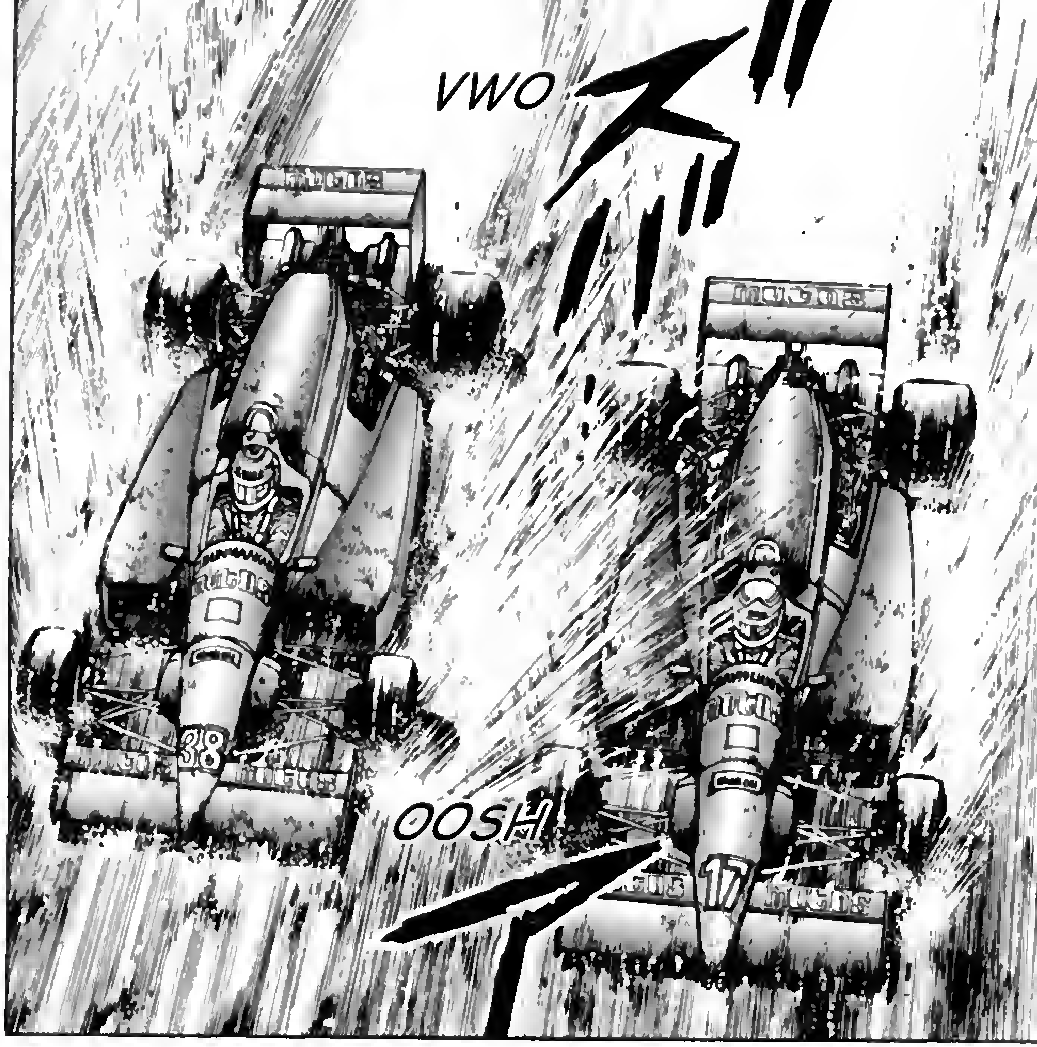
DRIP
DRIP
DRIP
GUNMAAKAGI
DRIP
DRIP
!!
DRIP
GUNMAAKAGI
UNMAAKAGI
It's a down-pour!
...way.
No...
PITTER
PITTER
Huh!?
SHAAAAAAA
SHAAAAAAA
AVON

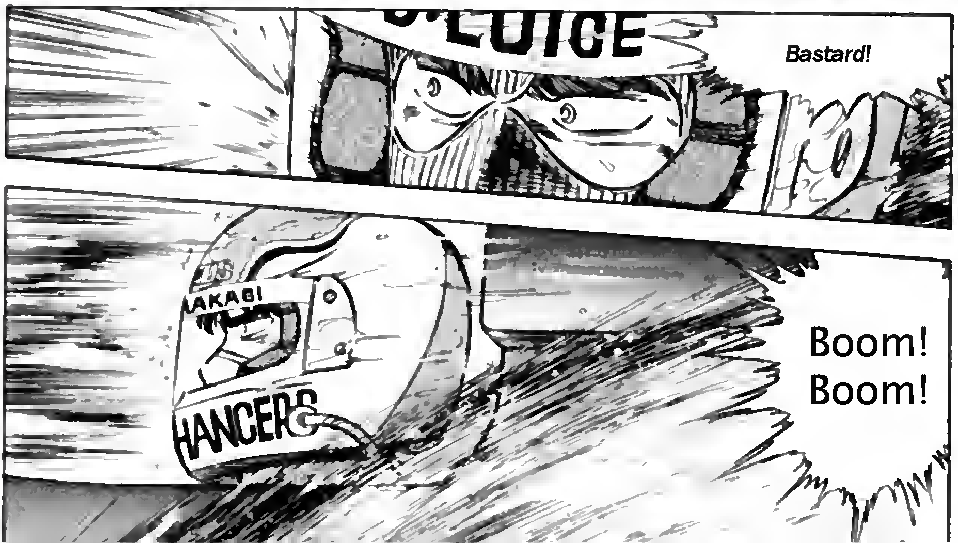

SHAAAAAAA
This is awful! Vallelunga is known for its sudden downpours, but what timing!
With only about two laps left in the race...

Got it!
Have them slow down to keep their spots! Otherwise they'll slip off the track!
HANG

It's not fair.
No...
ZWOOSH


This rain oughta cool down the engine!
Yeah! Ha ha ha!
Tsk. And I only got two laps left... I gotta play this safe.
Someone up there is rootin' for me!
THUMP
Here we go, baby!
SHASH
Hey!


VWO
OOSH
38
17


Bastard!
AKABI
Boom!
Boom!

Boom...?
Wow! No. 38 Gunma Akagi in second is about to overtake No. 17 David Louis for the lead!
He's taken the inside, and is about to turn the last corner!

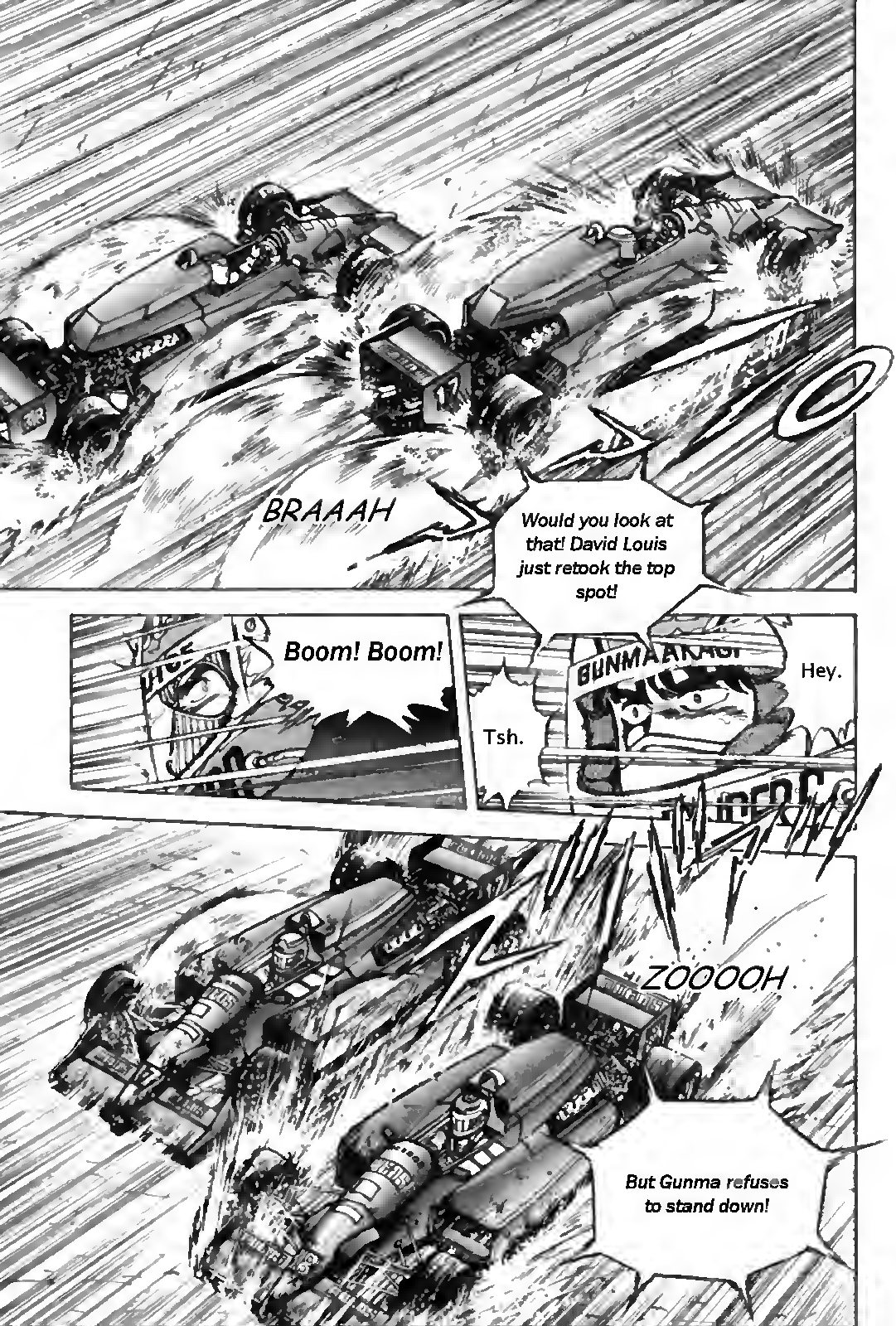
Huh...?
D-LUICE
KEEP!
WOOSH
What the hell is "keep" supposed to mean!? They expect me to stay in second place now!?
GUNMA
SPLISHHH

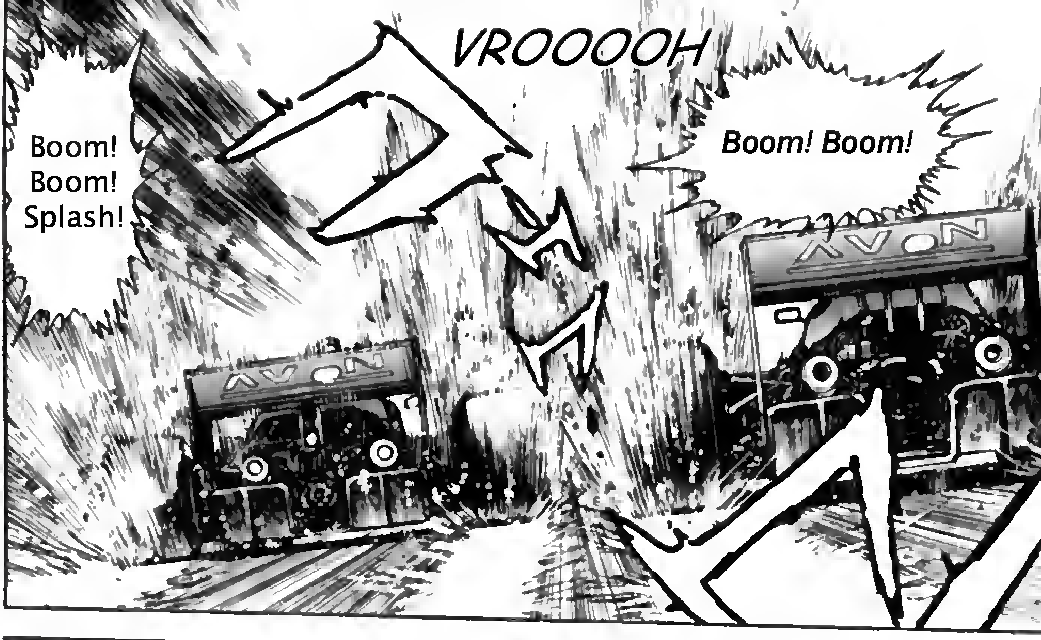
It doesn't matter. Just as long as my team can secure first and second place.
Our main concern is that they cross the finish line safely now!
That might have been a mistake.
We may have hurt Oavid's pride.
He's done it! Gunma Akagi has just barely overtaken David Louis to move into first place!

...
D·LUICE
Hell yeah! Nobody stays in front of me, sucker!
PIK
PIK
PIK
110
100

Boom...
Ba...

SHOOH


BRAAAH
Would you look at that! David Louis just retook the top spot!
Boom! Boom!
Tsh.
GUNMAAAAH!
Hey.
ZOOOOH
But Gunma refuses to stand down!


VROOOOH
Boom!
Boom!
Splash!
Boom! Boom!
AVON
AVON

Gunma
...

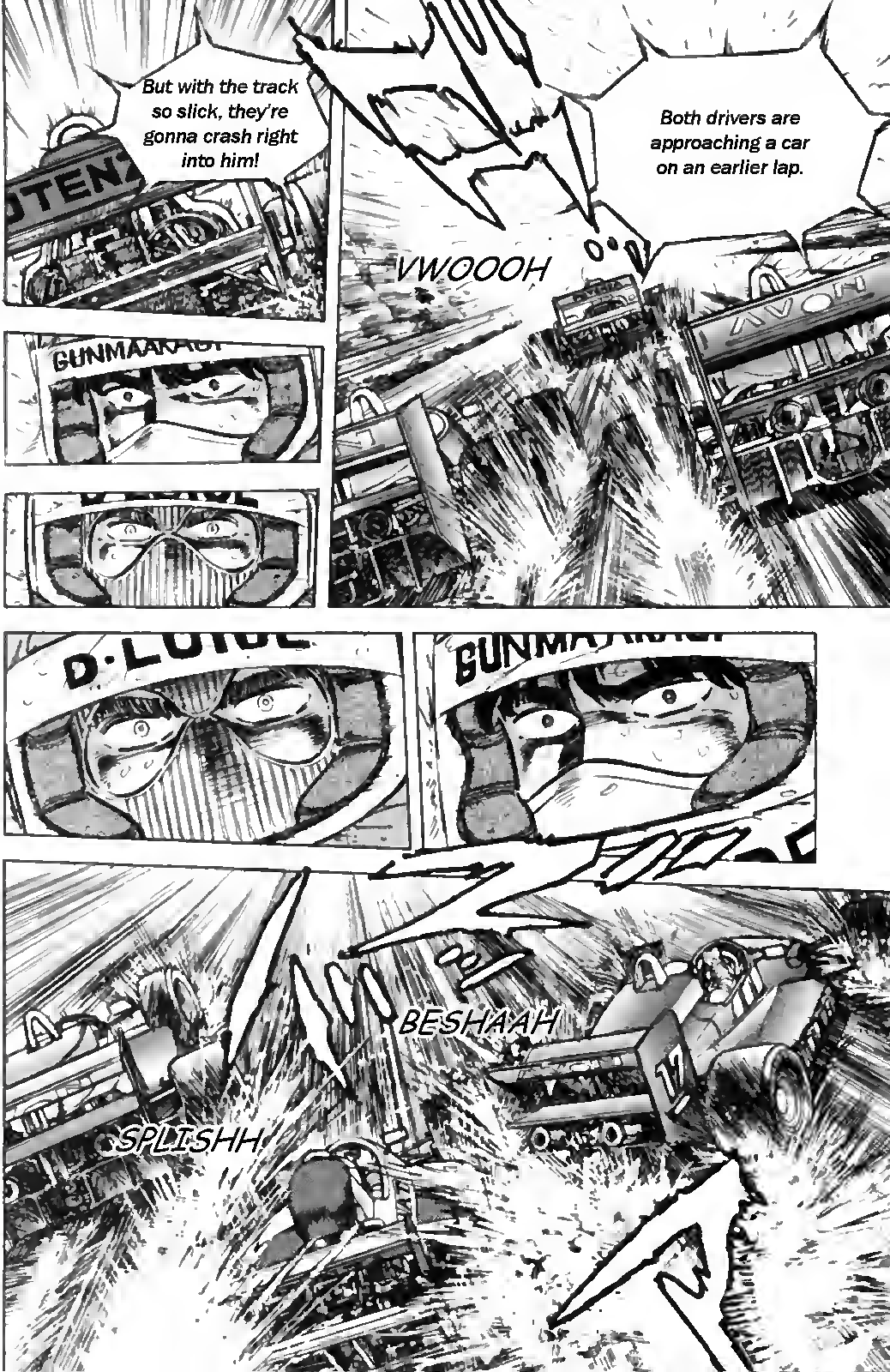
Idiots!
What the hell are they doing?

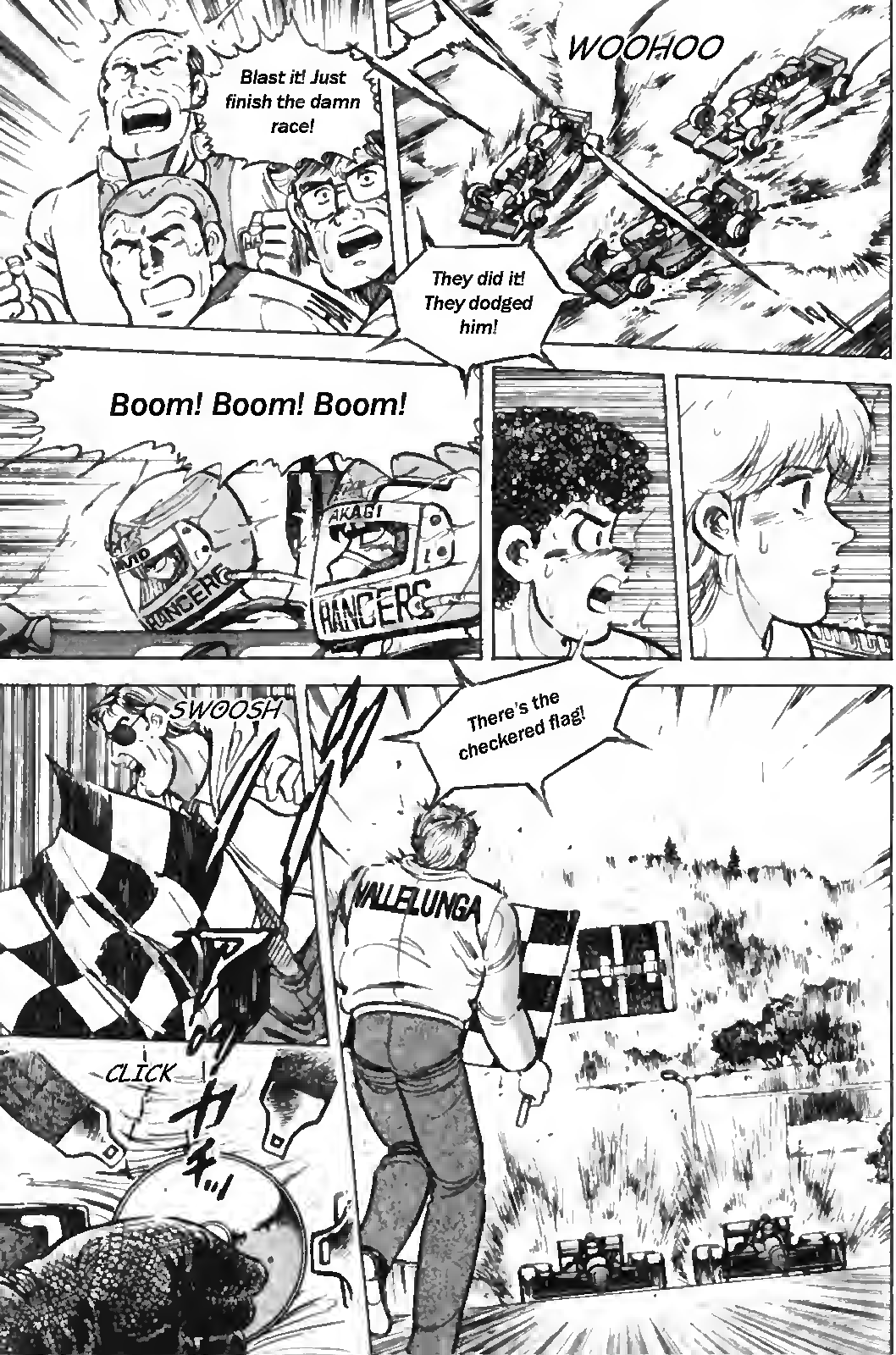
SHAAAA
Both drivers are fully engaged, seemingly unfazed by the downpour!
Oh my... They failed to brake in time on the first corner!
AVON

BZZZSHHH
ZOOOOH
They're hydroplaning!

SPLISHH
BSHOOOOH
Phew! They barely stayed on course!
GUNMAAK
Ba...
HAN
Boom!
Boom!
HANG
VRRR
They've managed to slither their way back onto the track, like a couple of eels!
IRR
RRK

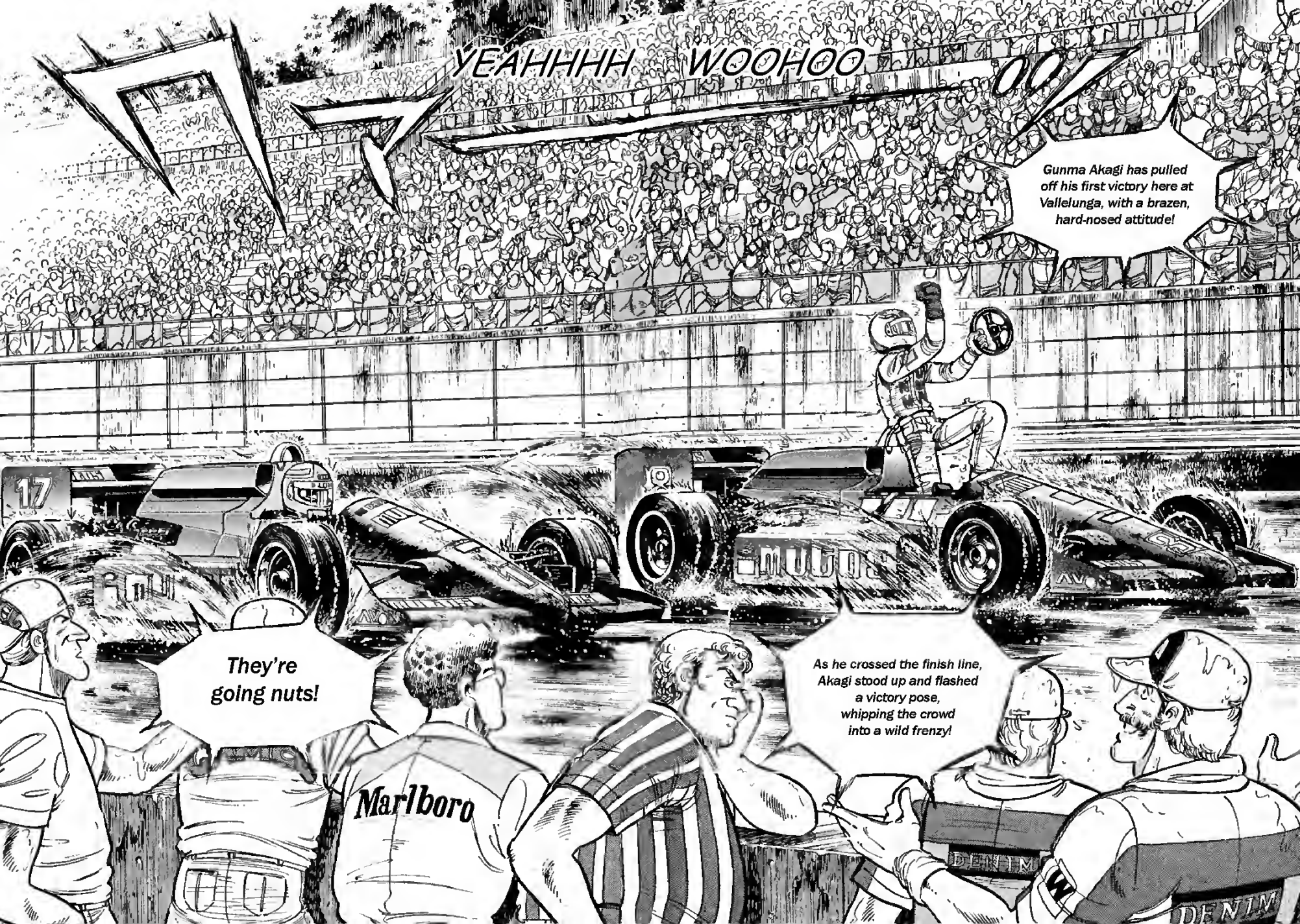
Neither racer is backing down!
Considering how far away the third place driver is, they don't need to be so aggressive!
In fact...
...this behavior is downright reckless!
KEEP
YEAH HA HA
WOOHOO
Now for the final lap!
Boom! Boom!
Boom! Boom! Splash!


But with the track so slick, they're gonna crash right into him!
Both drivers are approaching a car on an earlier lap.
VWOOOH
GUNMAARAGI
D·LUIGI
GUNMAARAGI
BESHAAH
SPLISHH
17

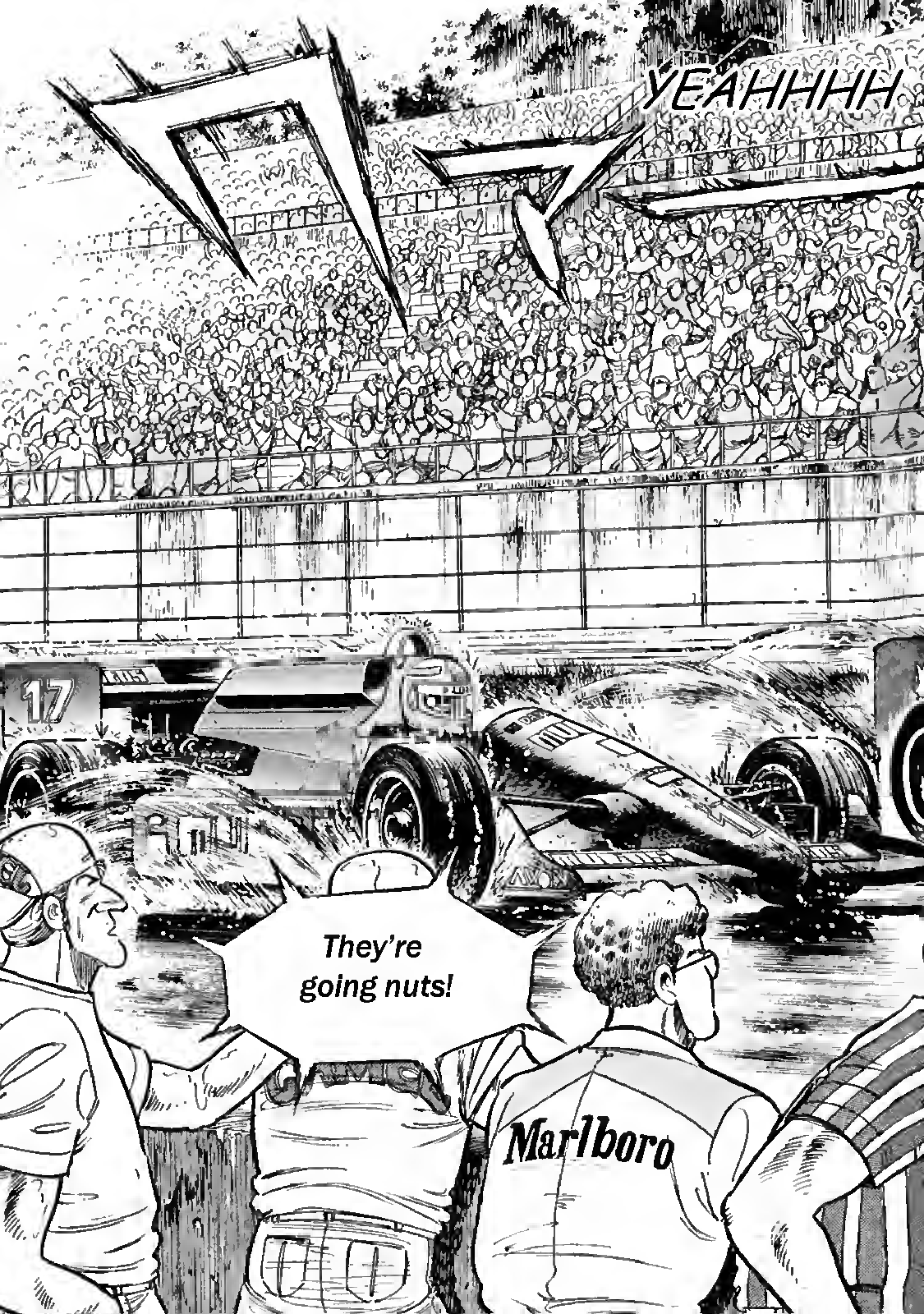

Blast it! Just finish the damn race!
WOOHOO
They did it! They dodged him!
Boom! Boom! Boom!
AKAGI
RANGERS
SWOOSH
There's the checkered flag!
VALLELUNGA
CLICK
カチッ!

Gunma Akagi wins it! Barely managing to inch past David Louis for the victory!
VRR
Shell oils
17
Shell oils
D·LUICE
GUNMAAKAG
WOOHOO
GUNMA AKAGI
Look at that confidence, as he leaps out of his car with a victory pose!

Chapter 7:
Breakdown

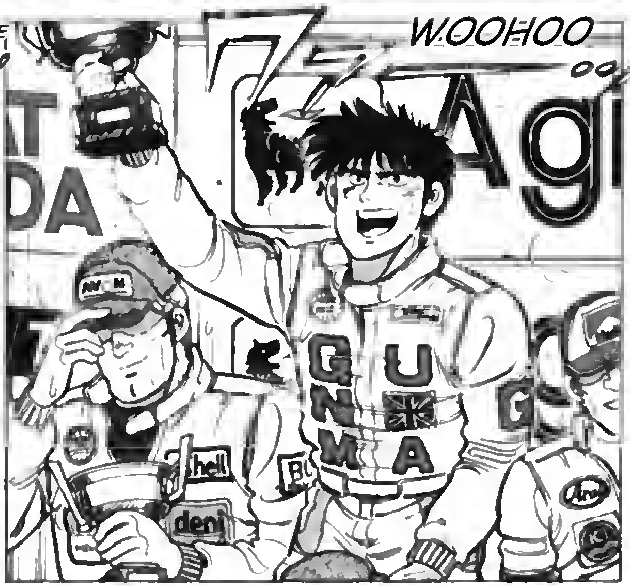

YEAHHHH WOOHOO
Gunma Akagi has pulled off his first victory here at Vallelunga, with a brazen, hard-nosed attitude!
17
They're going nuts!
Marlboro
As he crossed the finish line, Akagi stood up and flashed a victory pose, whipping the crowd into a wild frenzy!
DENIM
DENIM

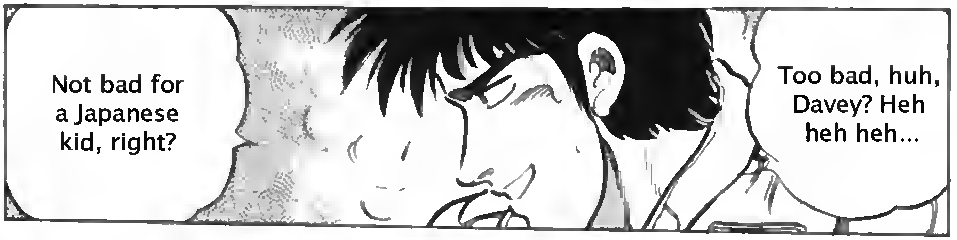
WOOHOO
Gunma Akagi has pulled off his first victory here at Vallelunga, with a brazen, hard-nosed attitude!
As he crossed the finish line, Akagi stood up and flashed a victory pose, whipping the crowd into a wild frenzy!
DENIM
DENIM


YEAHHHH
17
They're going nuts!
Marlboro

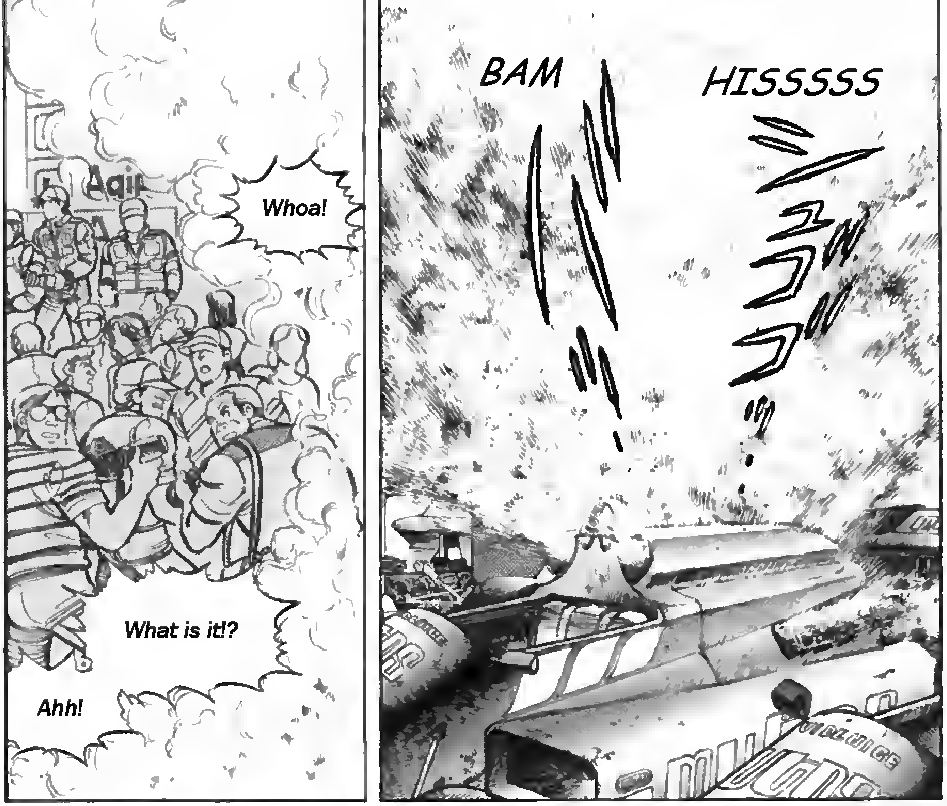
BAM

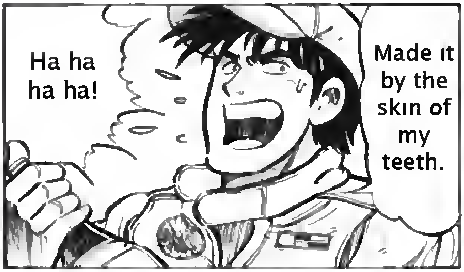
CLAP
CLAP
WHISTLE
CLAP
CLAP
CLAP
CLAP
CLAP
CLAP
CLAP
CLAP
CLAP
CLAP
WHISTLE
WHISTLE


WOOHOO
GUNMA

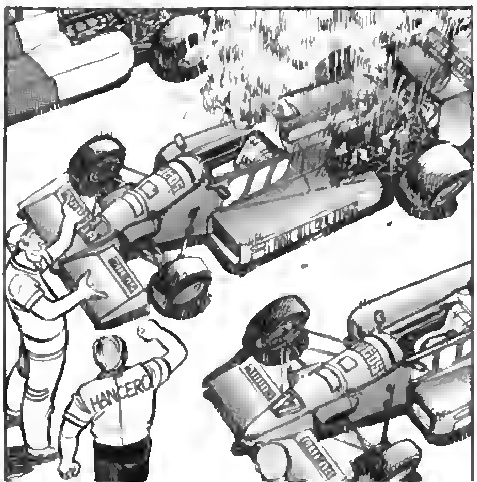

Not bad for a Japanese kid, right?
Too bad, huh, Davey? Heh heh heh...

You've got a set of balls there, mate.


Aqir
Whoa!
What is it!?
Ahh!
BAM
HISSSSS

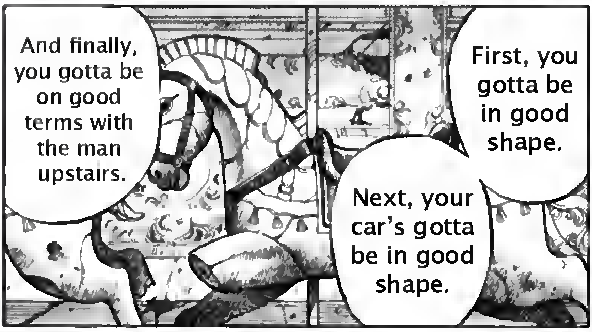

Ha ha ha ha!
Made it by the skin of my teeth.

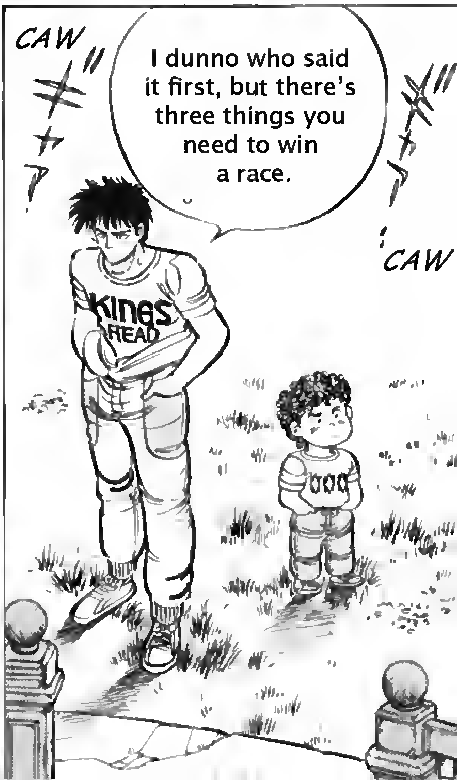
I'll be damned, look at all that steam! His car was seconds from overheating!

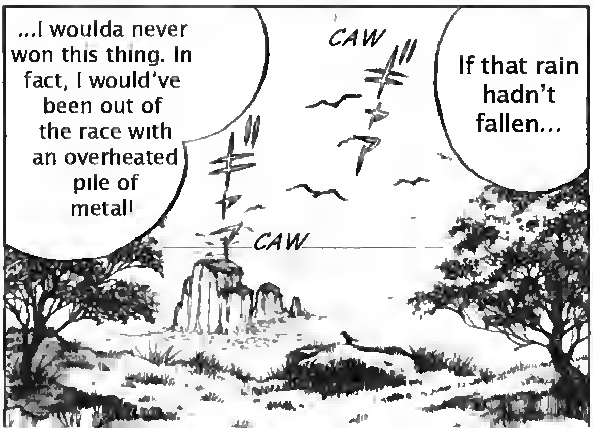

HANCER

WOOHOO
CLAP CLAP CLAP
PSHHH
Pee-pee time!

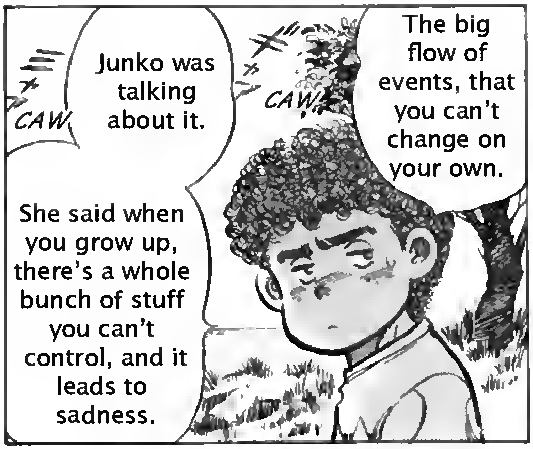
Ha ha ha!
CAW
CAW
CAW
CREAK
ギギ…
CREAK

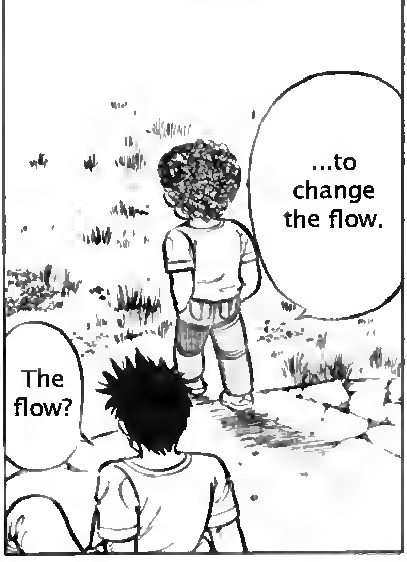

And finally, you gotta be on good terms with the man upstairs.
First, you gotta be in good shape.
Next, your car's gotta be in good shape.

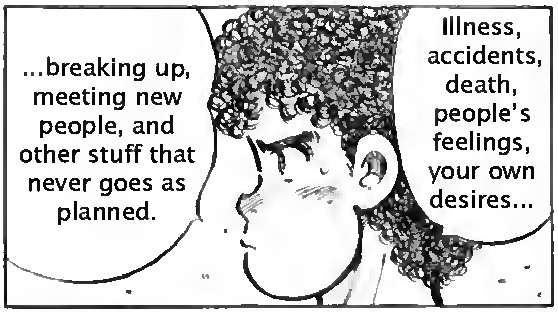

CAW
I dunno who said it first, but there's three things you need to win a race.
CAW
KINGS HEAD


...I woulda never won this thing. In fact, I would've been out of the race with an overheated pile of metal!
CAW
CAW
If that rain hadn't fallen...

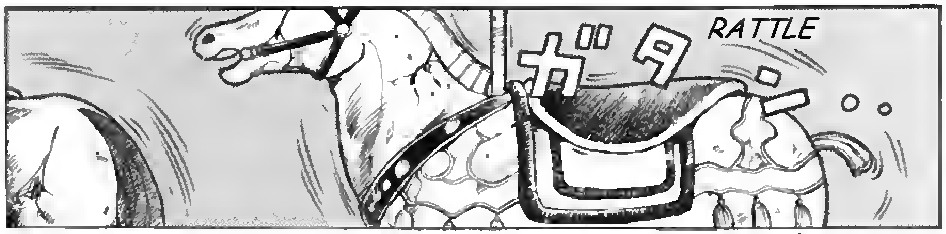
My mechanic Michael... He looked over the car after the race.
And found some-thing funny.
SCREEK
GREAK
KINGS HEAD
Are you...
...saying that I did it, Gunma?
A frea-kin' bolt!
He said it was lodged in the radiator hose! Can you believe it?
That's why the engine wouldn't cool down! Ha ha ha!
What? Why would I?
Somebody must've put it in there on purpose, right?
The mechanic screwed up, dummy!
No mechanic would make that mistake.
Somebody slipped that bolt in on pur-pose.
Someone who wanted the engine to overheat, and blow up the car so you'd die in a blazing fireball!
Yeah ?
How come?
I dunno ...
May-be...

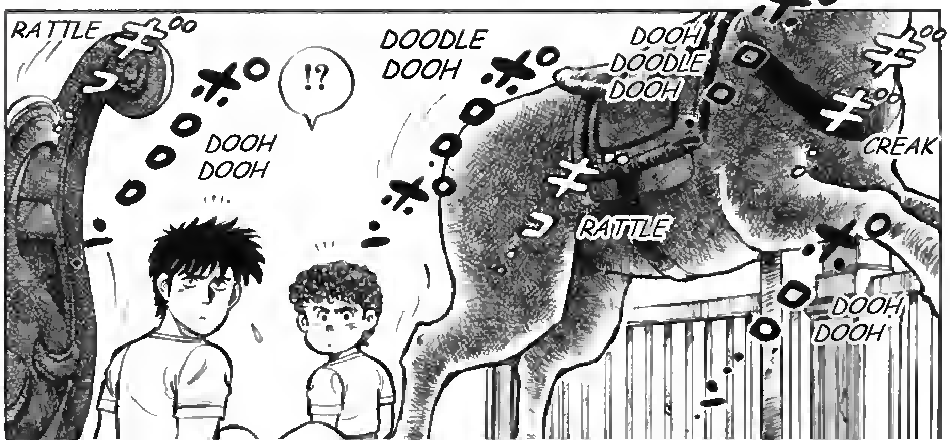

CAW
Junko was talking about it.
She said when you grow up, there's a whole bunch of stuff you can't control, and it leads to sadness.
CAW
The big flow of events, that you can't change on your own.

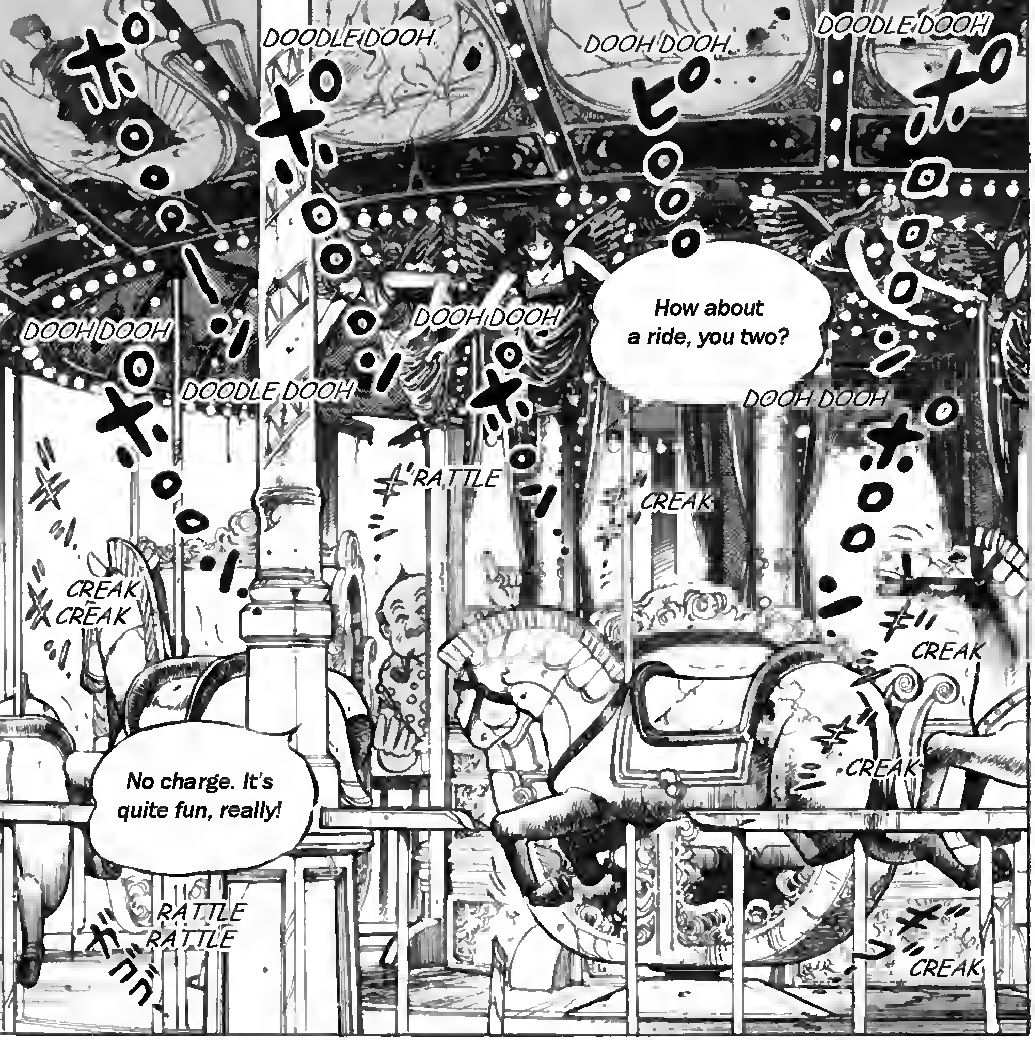

...to change the flow.
The flow?

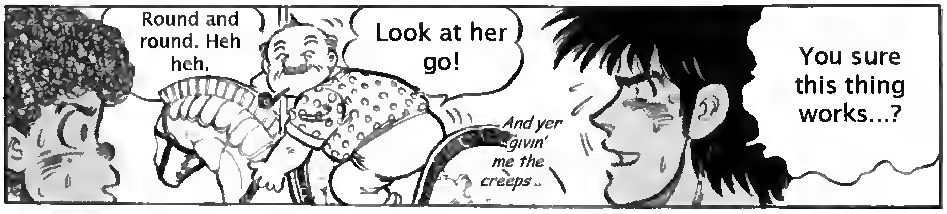

...breaking up, meeting new people, and other stuff that never goes as planned.
Illness, accidents, death, people's feelings, your own desires...

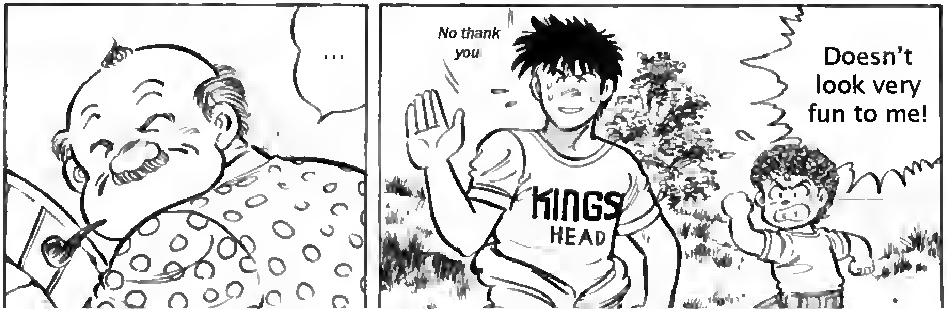
Say what?


RATTLE

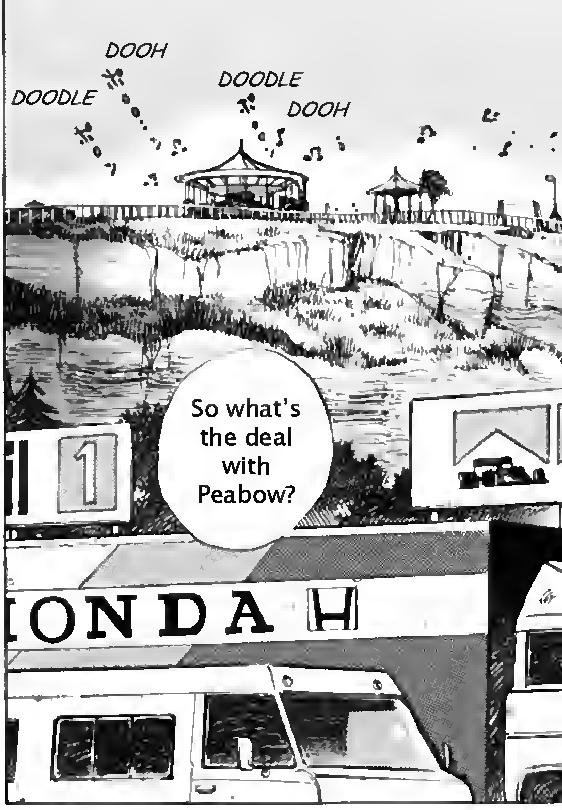

RATTLE
!?
DOOH DOOH
DOODLE DOOH
DOOH DOODLE DOOH
CREAK
RATTLE
DOOH DOOH

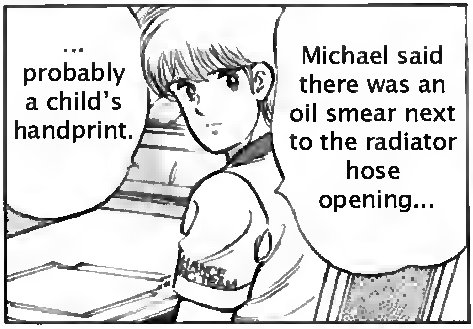

DOODLE DOOH
DOOH DOOH
DOODLE DOOH
How about a ride, you two?
DOOH DOOH
DOOH DOOH
DOODLE DOOH
RATTLE
CREAK
CREAK
CREAK
CREAK
CREAK
No charge. It's quite fun, really!
RATTLE
RATTLE
CREAK


Round and round. Heh heh.
Look at her go!
And yer givin' me the creeps..
You sure this thing works...?

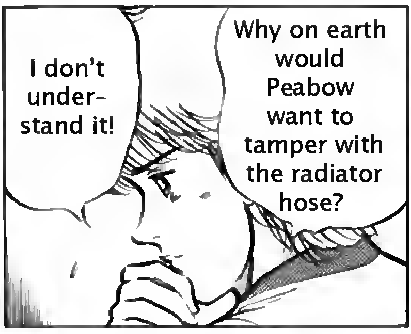

...
No thank you
KINGS HEAD
Doesn't look very fun to me!

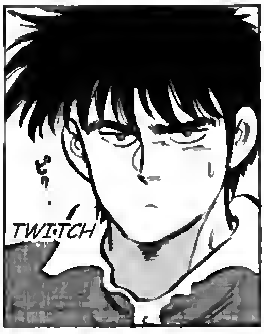
SHEEK

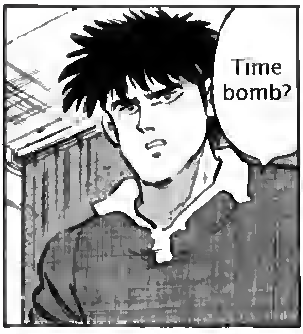

DOOH
DOODLE
DOODLE
DOOH
So what's the deal with Peabow?


... probably a child's handprint.
Michael said there was an oil smear next to the radiator hose opening...

Did anybody tell Hans about it?


I don't under-stand it!
Why on earth would Peabow want to tamper with the radiator hose?


TWITCH

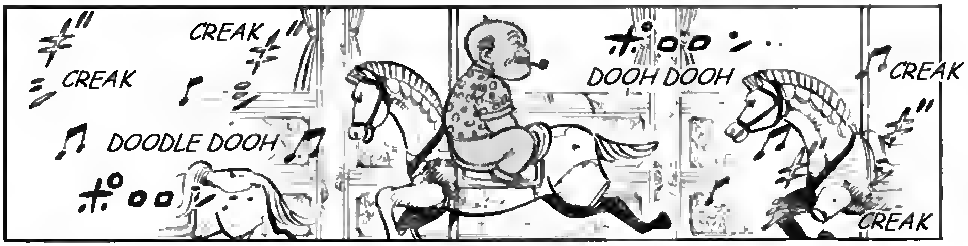

Time bomb?

To translate literally what Michael said to me... You shouldn't bring Peabow to the circuit anymore, because he's "a ticking time bomb."
No, since you won the race, he said to forget about it.

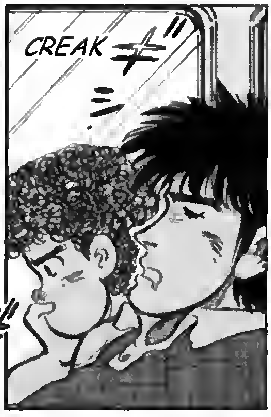
You know what makes a car run?
Hey Junko ...
VROOM
That should do it till we get back to England.
Marlboro
Basically... We're all racin' with a bomb stuck to us.
Compressed gas inside the cylinders makes a big explosion.
?
Even you...
If you ain't got one or two bombs inside you, you won't get nowhere in life.
KACHAK
And people are set up like that too.
Ryuji was your bomb, who kept you involved with racin' all this time.
And it's brought you all the way here to Europe!

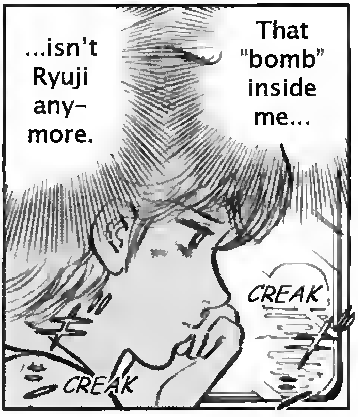
HANCERC
HANCERC
VEHICLE
HANCERC
ポイ FLICK
ギュッ GRIP!
PAT
ポン…
Keep it.
TUNK
ポイ
ヲ゛゜ ヲ゛゜ ヲ゛゜ ヲ゛゜ ヲ゛゜
VR VR VR VR VR
Shell
HANCERC
MOTOS

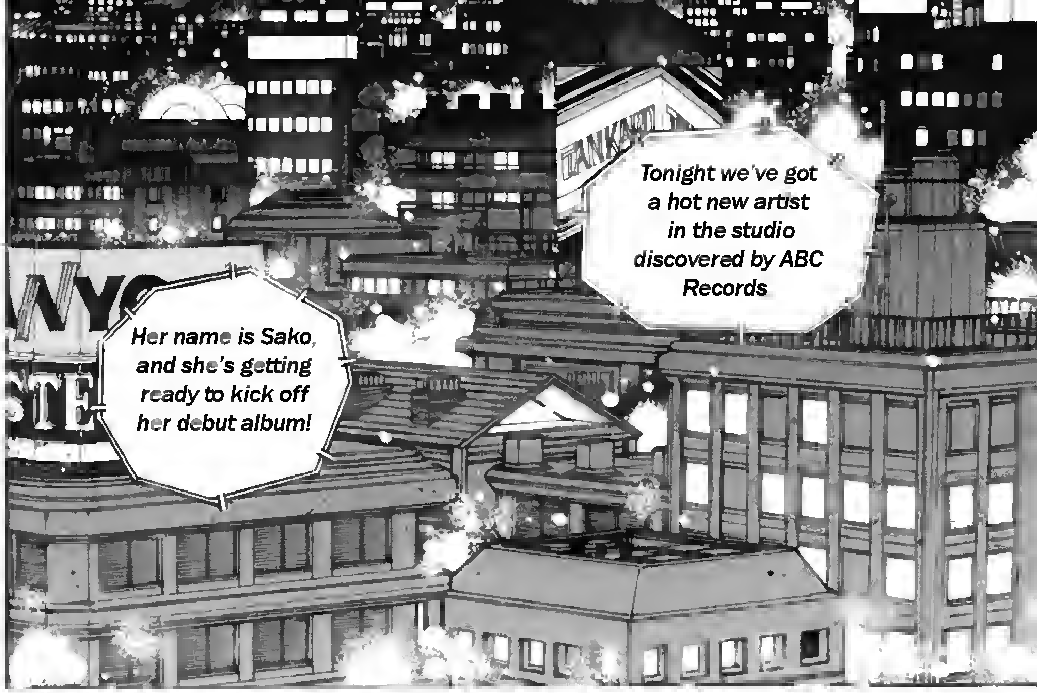
Marlboro
elf
DOMSRC
Marlboro
elf
DOMSRC

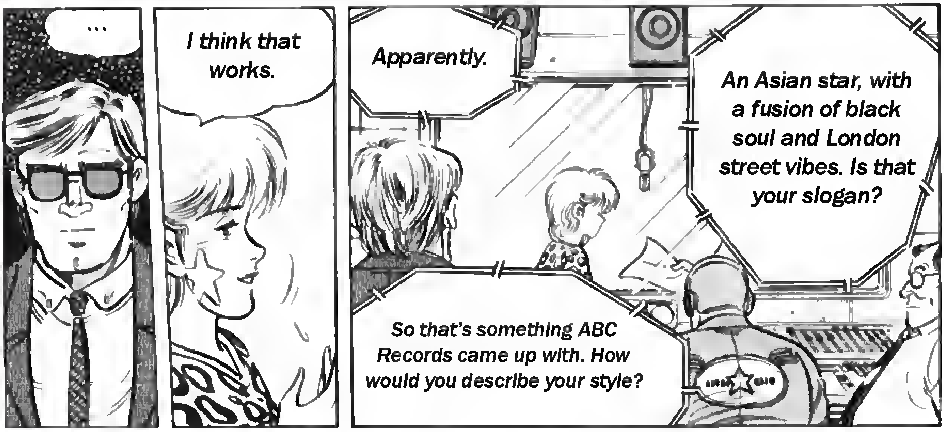

CREAK
CREAK
DOODLE DOOH
DOOH DOOH
CREAK
CREAK

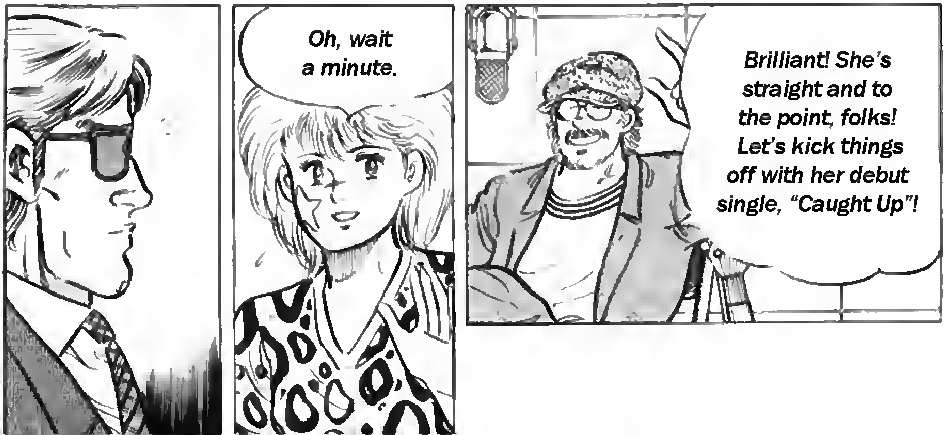
CREAK


CREAK


...isn't Ryuji any-more.
That "bomb" inside me...
CREAK
CREAK


Tonight we've got a hot new artist in the studio discovered by ABC Records
Her name is Sako, and she's getting ready to kick off her debut album!

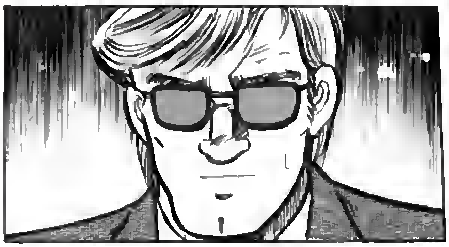

...
I think that works.
Apparently.
An Asian star, with a fusion of black soul and London street vibes. Is that your slogan?
So that's something ABC Records came up with. How would you describe your style?

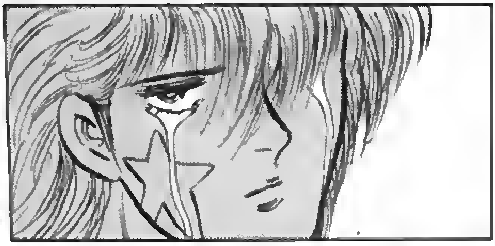

Oh, wait a minute.
Brilliant! She's straight and to the point, folks! Let's kick things off with her debut single, "Caught Up"!

...
What a bold move for a new musician!
You want to sing it right here, on the spot?
Before that, I was wondering if I could sing a song I wrote last night?
We'll save Caught Up for the ending...
That'll put our show into a bit of chaos, but I love it!
And listen to a live version of the song you wrote last night!
Play along in G7.
I like your courage, Sako! How about the guitar?
Wow, some powerful lyrics there.
He had his way with me, a man from long ago, but I'm not the woman I used to be!

I don't feel anything, feel anything, feel anything, for you anymore!
You set the bait all around me, and hooked me in like a little fish.
My feet were tangled in a sea of sheets, and I lost my freedom.
But you noticed my body quivering, ever so slightly in that sea of sheets.
...
I cannot love you, cannot love you, cannot love you, anymore!
What a cruel thing to do to me, you filthy, uncaring man!
SHUK
You could tell, my body went back in time, just for an instant.
But that's not love, that's not love, that's not love.

I thought about it all last night, and I had to sing it out to the world.
You betrayed me, betrayed me...
And now my mind is made up...



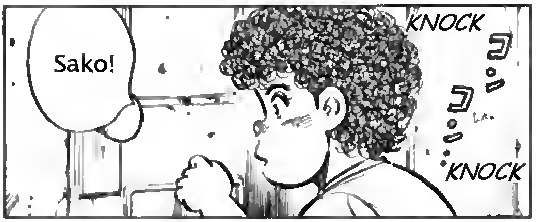


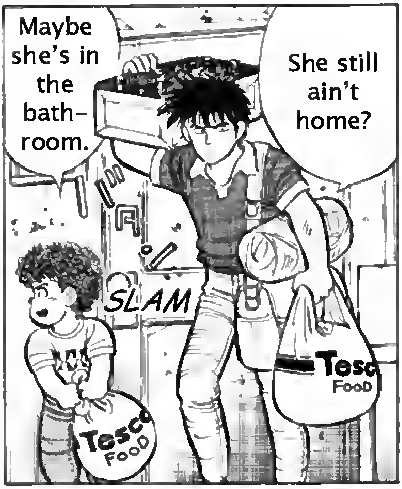
Actually, I think you were the one in shock.
You're a real piece of work, Sako.
Ha ha ha! It's just a song! A work of fiction!
The entire radio crew was in shock.

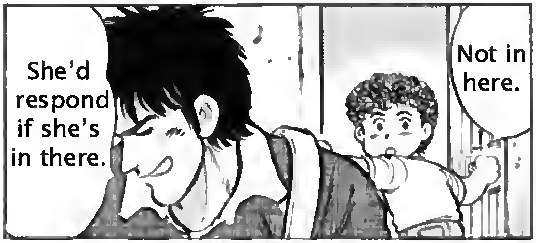
To go back to the hotel with you, so we can make up.
You peaked my curiosity with your lyrics. What exactly is it you've "made up your mind" about, hm?
Tyson didn't sleep with me. He knows I love Gunma, so he wouldn't do it.
At that moment, I realized who I am.
Brilliant! You're finally coming around, then!
Sleeping with that big black fellow set your priorities straight, did it?
!!
A man like you is the perfect fit for me.
I'm not worthy of being loved by someone like Gunma.
And I have no right to love him.
A man like you...
Hmph.

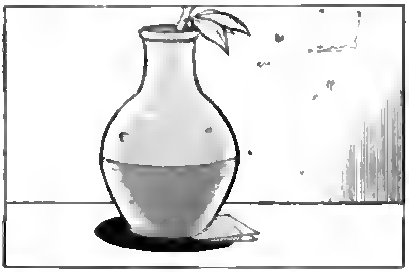
Chapter 8:
Farewell Letter

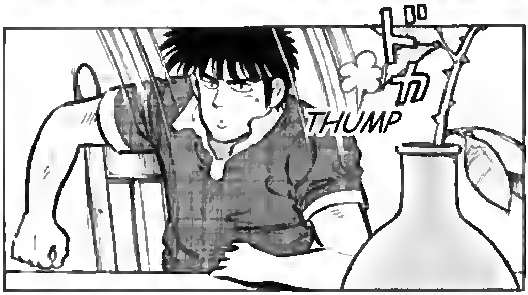
DRUGS
Sako.

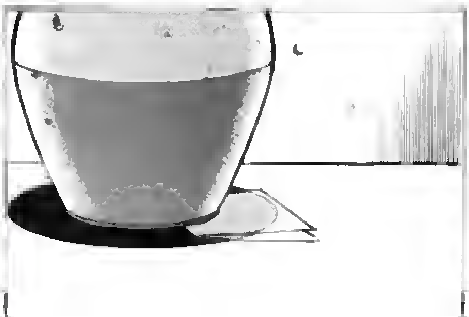

Sako!
KNOCK
KNOCK


Maybe she's in the bath-room.
She still ain't home?
SLAM
Tesco
FOOD
Tesco
FOOD

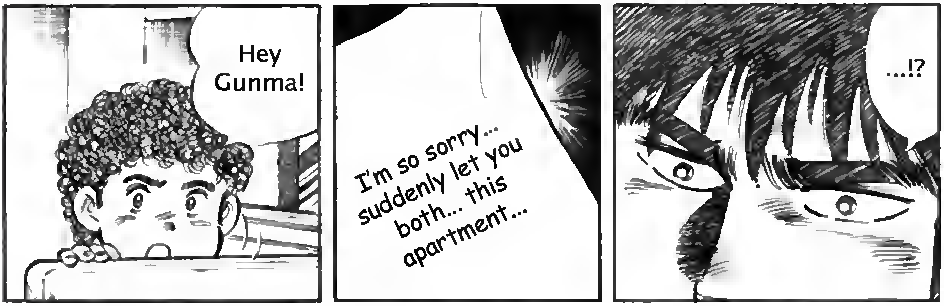

She'd respond if she's in there.
Not in here.




THUMP



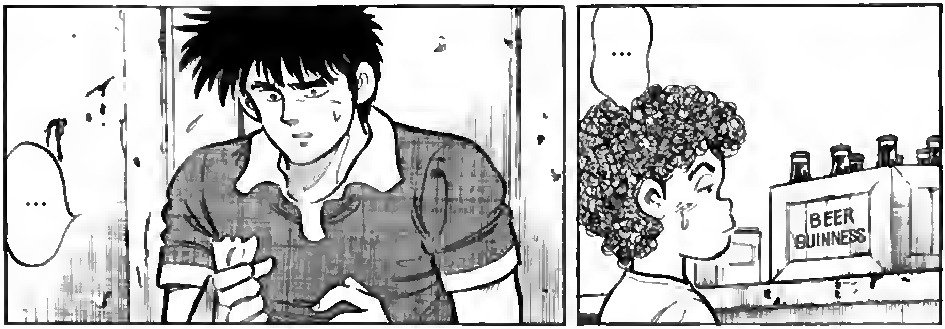
You want a beer, Gunma?
Tesco
FOOD


Hey Gunma!
I'm so sorry... suddenly let you both... this apartment...
...!?

...so I should make some-thing great! Heh heh...
Sako ought to be home soon...
Don't you wanna beer? While I make dinner?
TUNK
Yeah...? What is it?

Okay?
Hey, I'm going out for a bit.
After all, we gotta celebrate your first F3000 win, right?

HAHA HA
はっはっは
You ain't got enough in here.
Maybe I'll pick up some more beer.
SLAM
Just around... I got nothin' to do till you make dinner, anyway.
But where?


...
...
BEER
GUINNESS

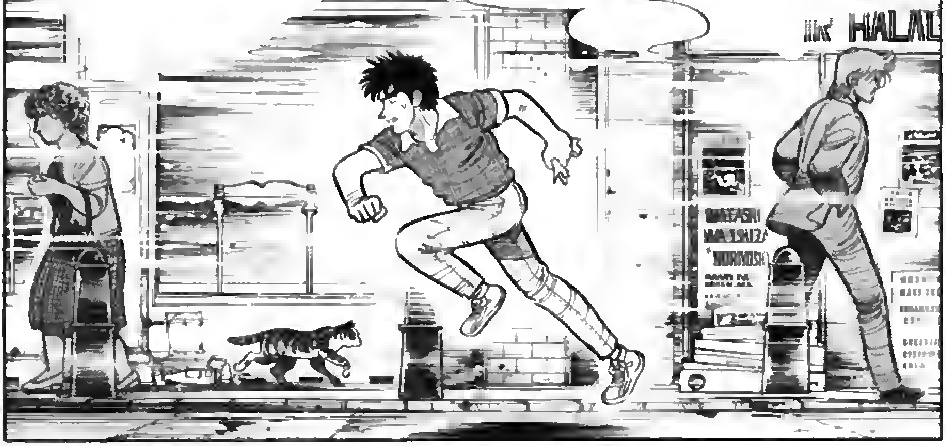
Gunma, you need to race. Peabow has to grow up. And I can't abandon my music.
In the end, I feel it's the best thing for all three of us.
I've decided to leave this apartment.
I'm so sorry to suddenly let you both down like this.

I had such a good time, the days we kept each other warm, as if we were a real family. Please cherish those memories, and live your lives to the fullest. I promise to do the same.

That's all I ask.

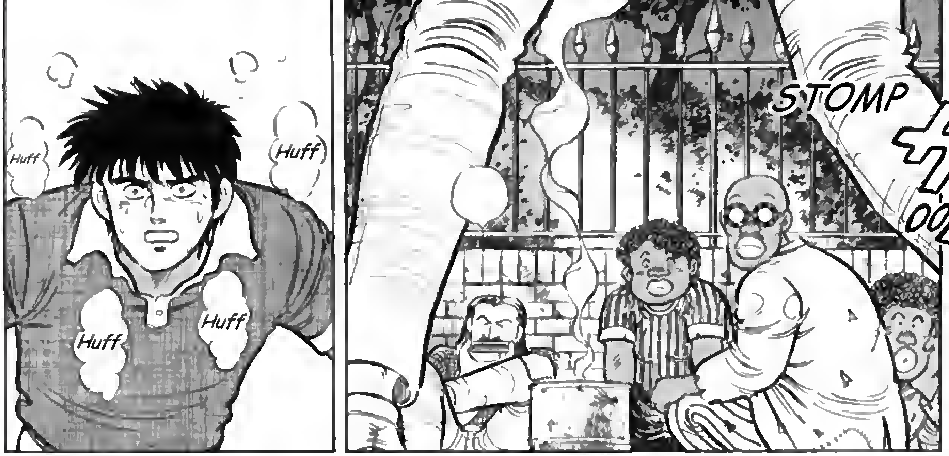
That's all I ask.

Don't come after me. I want both of you to forget about me.

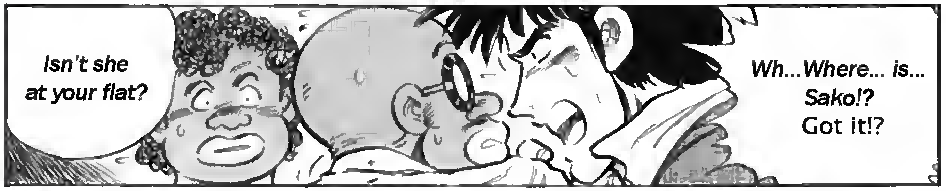


To Peabow: Peabow, my lovely, lovely boy. We were like mother and child, sister and brother, best of friends, and sweethearts all rolled into one. My days were filled with joy thanks to you! My hope for you now, is that you grow into a responsible adult. Take care of yourself!

To Gunma: I really loved you, and you loved me back. But Junko is the best choice for you. And I pray you'll be racing in F1 soon.


Huff
Huff
Huff
Huff
STOMP

Where's Sako!? I'm askin' about Sako!
What on earth is the matter, Gunma?
Something about Sako? I don't know what he's saying.
Where is she!? Where's Sako!?


Isn't she at your flat?
Wh...Where... is... Sako!? Got it!?

Maybe they had a fight.
Goodness...
FWOOSH

!?
It don't make any sense...
Why'd she disappear all of a sudden!?
Dammit, what happened!?
TUNK
MENU
PEPSI
What made you leave like this, Sako!? Speak up!
What the hell happened to you!?
C-Calm down...!
Hello.

Every night I sat here listening to her sing, I knew she'd make it big some day!
Hmph. You're not the only one.
You did it.
You finally did it, Sako. Well done!
SLAM..
We'll probably never see her performing here again, then...
Huff
Huff
Huff
Huff
...
What is it, Gunma?
FWOOSH

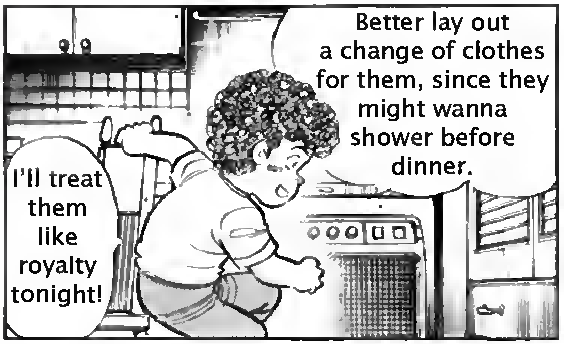
SLIP
I can't read Japanese.
Gotta have some believa-bility!
...
Sako just up and left!?
For real!?
Yeah, just all of a sudden.
Oof...
How come!?
WHY!?
But why!?
Gunma ...
That's why I'm lookin' all over for her!
I dunno why!

I called ABC Records, but her manager isn't there. They don't know anything.
I called the TV station, but it was recorded earlier.
It's no good.
CLICK
Phonecard
Damn!
CRASH
Because I know how much she loves you.
She was acting really odd.
I didn't do anything! I promise!
It's him!
...
She asked me to have sex with her, caught me off guard.
Actually, Sako was acting strange the other day.
Sex!?

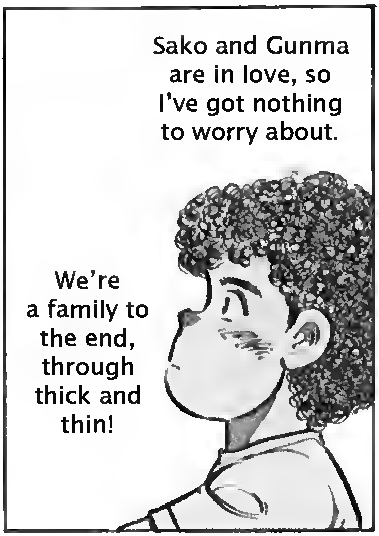
...and get her to tell me what's going on...
Now I gotta go straight to ABC Records...
He did something to Sako!
That bastard George...
Does he know about this?
What about Peabow?
Sako was the only family he ever had!
What a shame. That poor kid is all alone now.
I haven't told him yet.
Sigh...
...

And I think Gunma kinda figured out I was behind the radiator hose.
Maybe Sako's still mad.
Man, they're late.
Dinner's getting cold.

I should apologize tonight.
Doubting them like that.
I was such a jerk.
Wow...


Better lay out a change of clothes for them, since they might wanna shower before dinner.
I'll treat them like royalty tonight!

?
SHUK


Sako and Gunma are in love, so I've got nothing to worry about.
We're a family to the end, through thick and thin!

SWOOP
Sako's clothes ...
Huh?
No pictures...
No clothes, no manuscripts...
No make-up...
FWISH
There's nothing left.
They're gone!
Hey Peabow! Check this out!
Ha ha ha ha!
SLAM
What's going on here!?
What ...

だっはっはっは…
HA-HA
HA-HA
And they followed me all the way home. Ha ha ha!
I ran into these jokers in town!
I couldn't stop 'em when they figured out you were cookin' dinner!
Hi Peabow! How've you been, love?

CLOP
Don't look so down, Peabow! We brought you a gift in return!
CLOP
Trying to keep your scrumptious meal a secret from us, are you?
We'll party to the light of day!
CLOP
Tesco
FOOD
Ooh! This smells quite good, this!
Hear, hear!

Where is she?
Whe-re's Sako?
We got plenty of beer now!
What's wrong!?
Gun-ma...
Whe-re's...
Where'd she go?
Sako's things are gone.
...
Glasses all around!
Cheers all around!
...
Cheers!
...
Where is she, Gunma!?
How come Sako's things are gone!?
Tell me!

No...
... Peabow.
She left...
Sako's uh...
...when we were gone, she did a lot of thinkin', and decided that's what's best.
But...
I dun- no.
Why!?
She... she... we were... I thought that...
Please no...
HIC
ひいい...
No... Sniff...
But...
Waahaa... Uh- huuhh...
Suck it up and be a man!
Quit yer sobbin', Peabow!

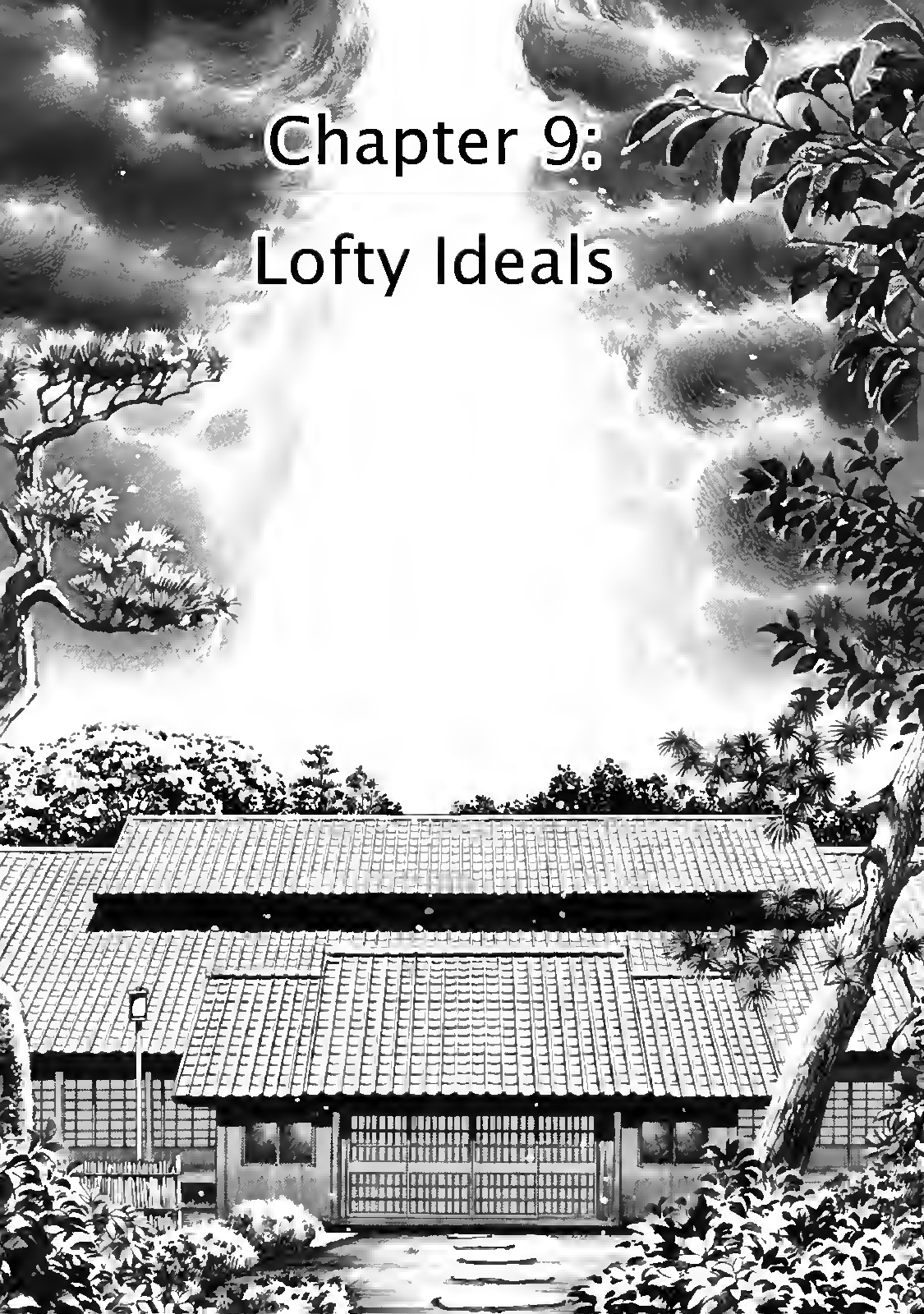
I don't like it no more than you do, Peabow.
I'll go find her.
Gunma...

Okay?
Then I'll decide if it's right or not!
So just stop cryin'!
I'll track her down, and hear what she really thinks, from her own mouth!

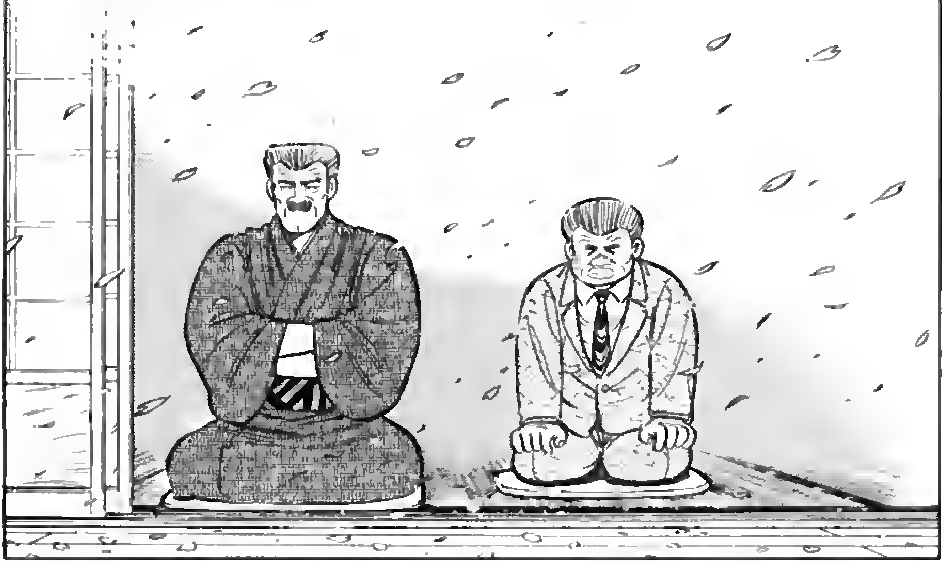
When you gotta grow up and be a man, you stop cryin'.
No matter how much it hurts, you can't cry in front of everybody.
Everyone's here for you.
They're all worried about you, so they came to keep us company.

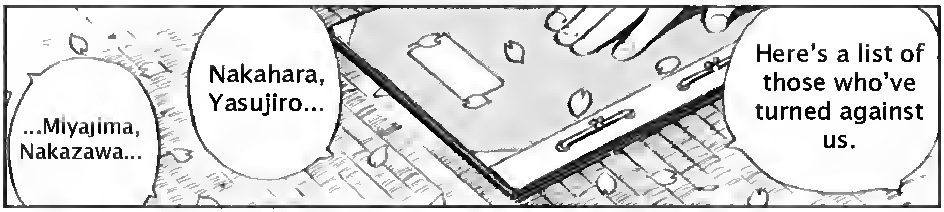
Wuhh ...
Huhh ... Sniff ...
It's a man's drink.
Here's a little whiskey to take the edge off.
GLUG GLUG トクトク...

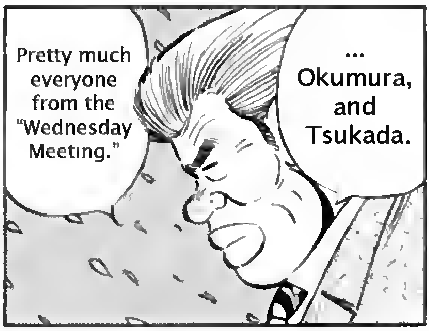
I swear I'll find you, Sako!
ゲップ GULP
ゲップ GULP


Chapter 9:
Lofty Ideals

KAROOOMMM
ドドド



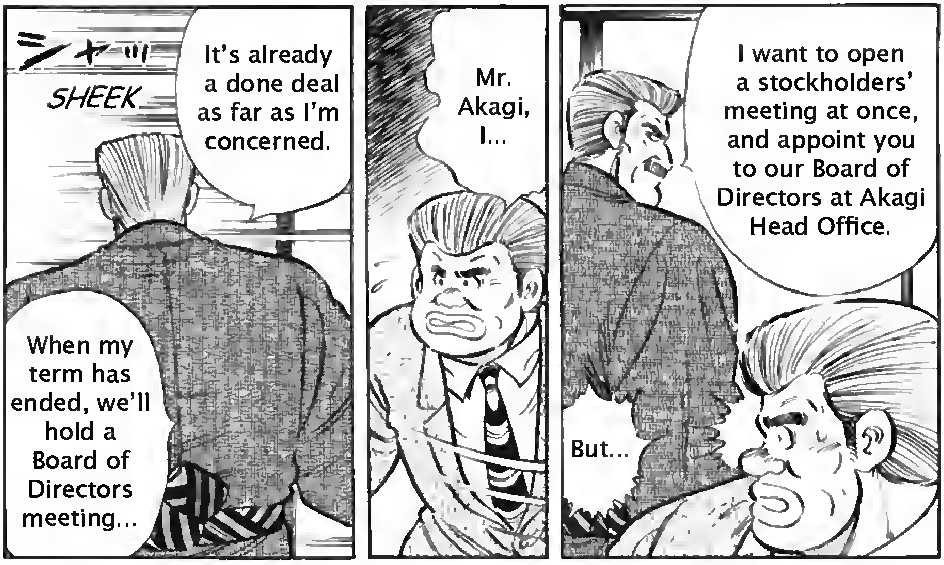

...Miyajima, Nakazawa...
Nakahara, Yasujiro...
Here's a list of those who've turned against us.


Pretty much everyone from the "Wednesday Meeting."
... Okumura, and Tsukada.

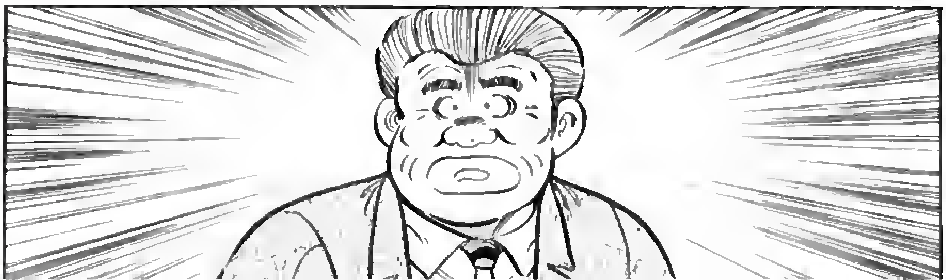
...then immediately stripping you of your executive status within your affiliates, all in one swipe.
Tagawa's plot most likely involves handing over the presidency of Akagi Group's Head Office to Shoma...

...the "Wednesday Meeting" presidents can't do anything if we protect the Head Office.
Since the Akagi Head Office holds more than half of the Group's equity...
Right, if things keep going like this.
Then I could enjoy an early retirement.
If they pull anything remotely suspicious...
It would be disadvantageous for them to betray you.
They wouldn't dare...
...you could "bleed them out" of the Group as you put it.
Well done, Kasai.
...until I step down as president of the Akagi Head Office, just as you've surmised.

It was my plea-sure.
...and came up with all sorts of valuable information. For that I'm thankful.
You tracked down Jiro Kida, got him to talk about Yuki's death, retrieved those negatives...


シャー!!!
SHEEK
It's already a done deal as far as I'm concerned.
When my term has ended, we'll hold a Board of Directors meeting...
Mr. Akagi, I...
I want to open a stockholders' meeting at once, and appoint you to our Board of Directors at Akagi Head Office.
But...

...and I intend to appoint you as president of the Akagi Head Office!

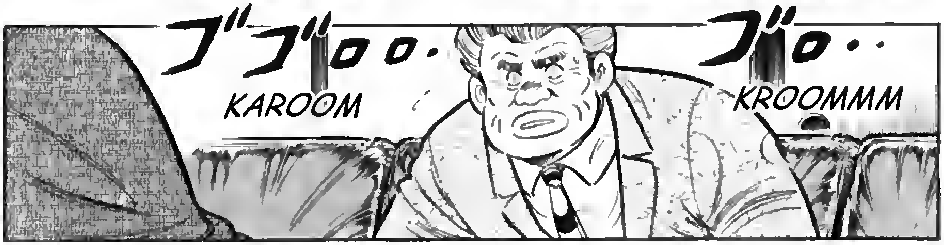


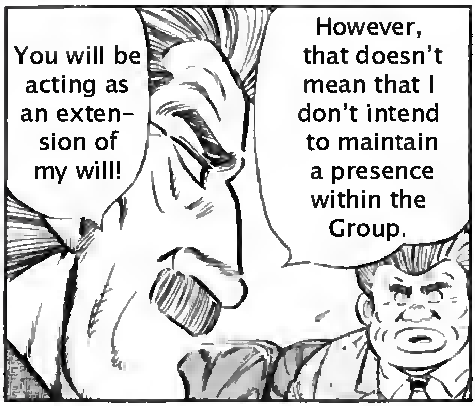
I don't have what it takes to run Akagi Group.
And besides, Shoma is set to inherit the position.
You can't be serious, Mr. Akagi!
I refuse your offer! I want nothing to do with it!
You...

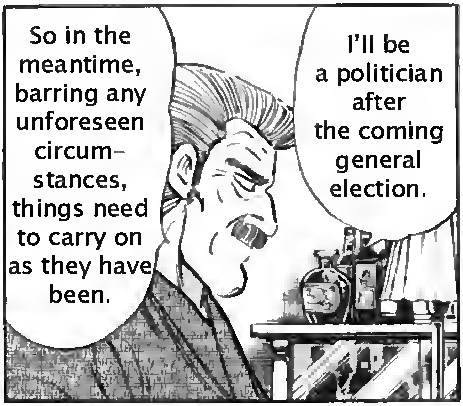
My mind was already made up some time ago! Once I've stepped down, Akagi Group will be under joint presidency!
There's no other way!

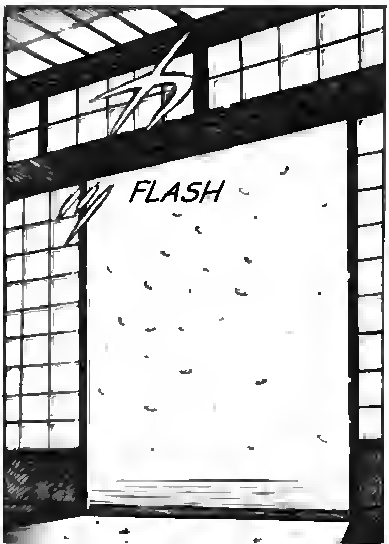
Have a seat, Kasai.
KROOMMM
Joint presi-dency...
Jo...
FLASH
Which means Shoma and you will both serve as presidents of the Group!

I need you of all people to take in what I'm about to tell you.
Now listen carefully.


ゴゴゴゴ・
KAROOM
ゴゴ・・
KROOMMM

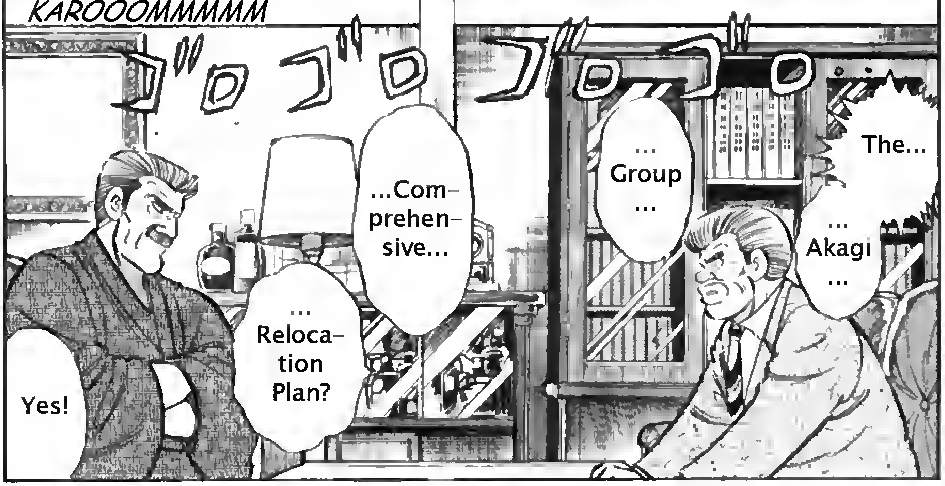

You will be acting as an extension of my will!
However, that doesn't mean that I don't intend to maintain a presence within the Group.

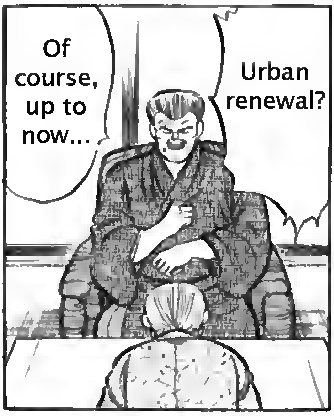

So in the meantime, barring any unforeseen circumstances, things need to carry on as they have been.
I'll be a politician after the coming general election.


FLASH

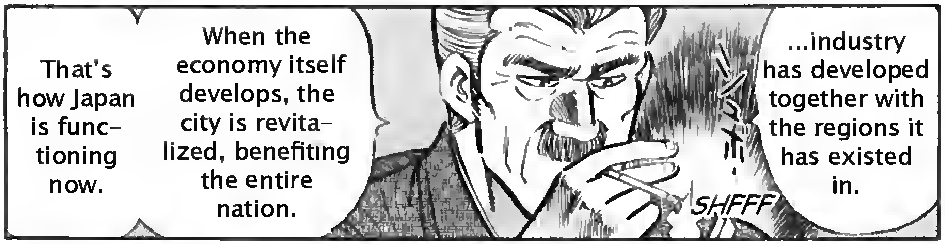
...what would that be, sir?
And ...

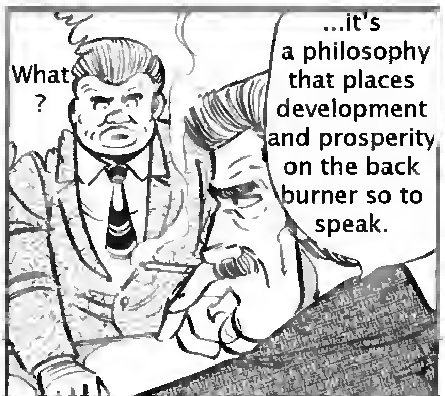
This will work together with what I'm trying to do politically.

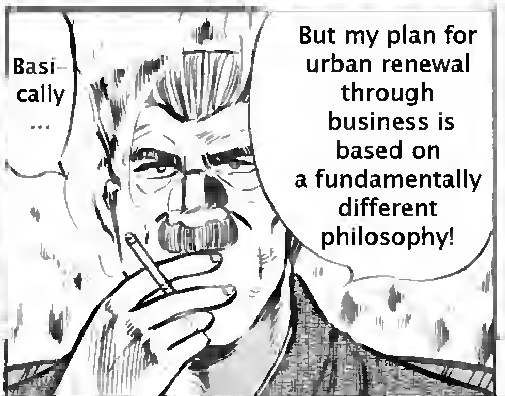

KAROOOMMMMM
Yes!
...Reloca-tion Plan?
...Com-prehen-sive...
... Group ...
... Akagi ...
The...


Of course, up to now...
Urban renewal?

...for urban rene-wal!
A single corporate body with certain objectives and intents...

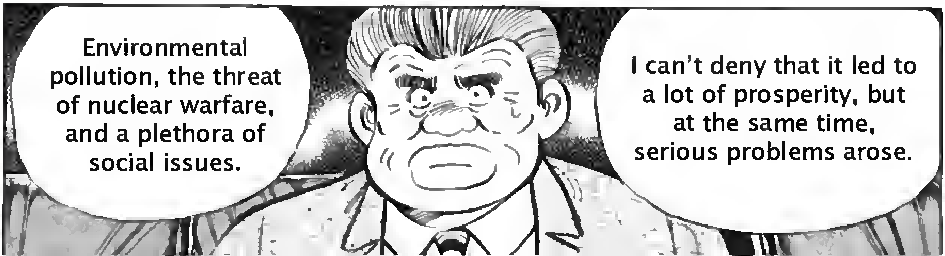

That's how Japan is func-tioning now.
When the economy itself develops, the city is revita-lized, benefiting the entire nation.
SHFFF
...industry has developed together with the regions it has existed in.


What ?
...it's a philosophy that places development and prosperity on the back burner so to speak.


Basi-cally ...
But my plan for urban renewal through business is based on a fundamentally different philosophy!

Did you forget where we came from?
Kasai...
What on earth are you...?
Development and prosperity on the back burner?

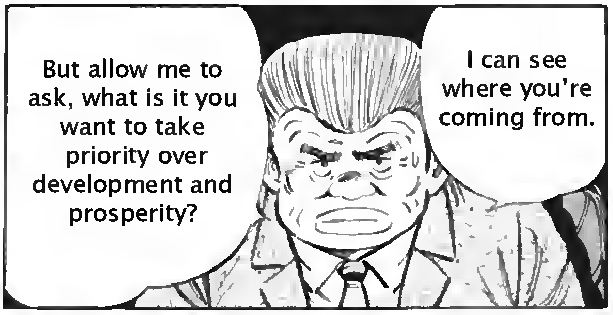
But we're not the only ones. Almost everyone had big dreams of wealth, earnestly creating products, and honing their trades to get ahead.
We worked day and night to pull ourselves out of that wasteland.

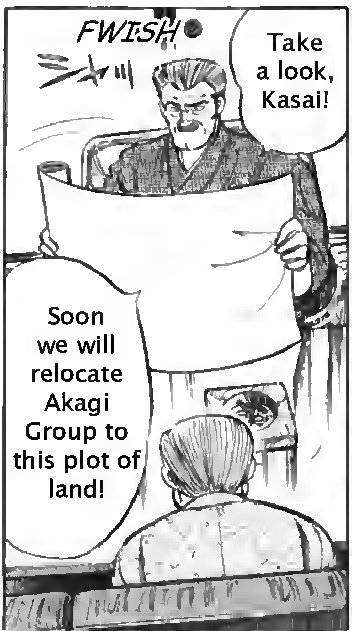

Environmental pollution, the threat of nuclear warfare, and a plethora of social issues.
I can't deny that it led to a lot of prosperity, but at the same time, serious problems arose.

If we let this go on, that wasteland will once again claim this nation.
Kasai...

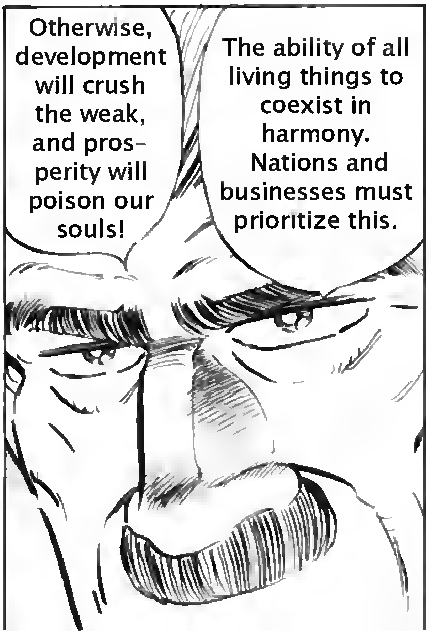
As long as people, businesses, and nations maintain this blind faith in development and prosperity above all else.
And this time, not a single flower will remain in bloom.

Har-mony!

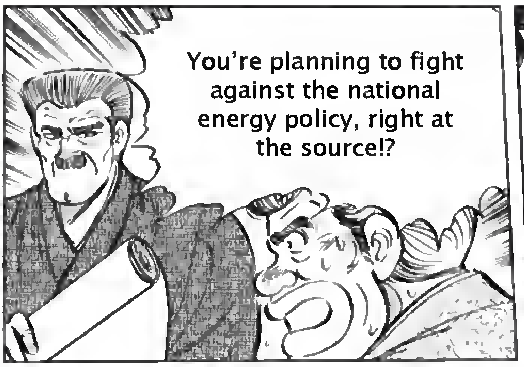

But allow me to ask, what is it you want to take priority over development and prosperity?
I can see where you're coming from.


FWISH
Take a look, Kasai!
Soon we will relocate Akagi Group to this plot of land!

...!


Otherwise, development will crush the weak, and prosperity will poison our souls!
The ability of all living things to coexist in harmony. Nations and businesses must prioritize this.

Rokkasho Village,
Aomori Prefecture

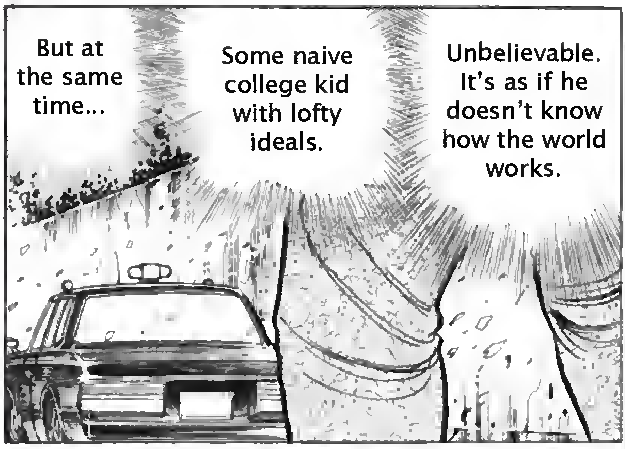

You're planning to fight against the national energy policy, right at the source!?

You mean...!
You ...

Now you know why I always mention a place "where flowers blossom"!
You've finally got it, Kasai!
KROOHOOM

You've finally got it, Kasai!

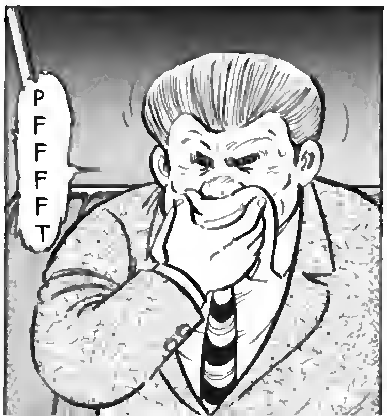
Now you know why I always mention a place "where flowers blossom"!
KROOHOOM

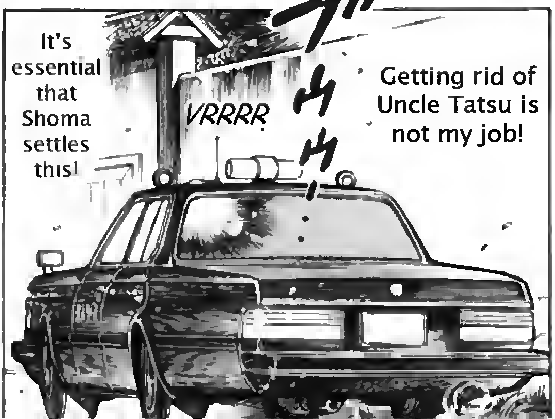

But at the same time...
Some naive college kid with lofty ideals.
Unbelievable. It's as if he doesn't know how the world works.

What a monu-mental man!

...I can't stop crying!
...for some reason...
Mr. Akagi, after hearing your distorted dream for Japan...

...and deliver them to Shoma.
Kasai, I want you to take those photo negatives you got from Jiro Kida, along with his taped confession...


PFFFFT


It's essential that Shoma settles this!
VRRRR
Getting rid of Uncle Tatsu is not my job!

福田交通
...Shoma has to see these.
Anyway ...
SWOOF
KACHUK
Something wrong?
!?
Gasp
What the...!?
Wh...

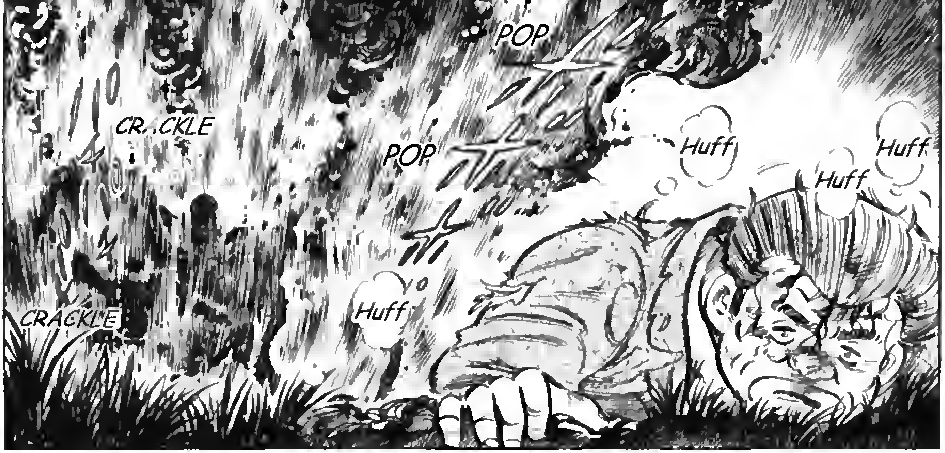
VREEEH
Nooooo!

VWOOSH

Tagawa you bastard!
BOOM

Chapter 10:
The Missing Bag

FROOOAR
BWOOSH
KABOOM
PITTER
PITTER
PITTER


POP
CRACKLE
POP
Huff
Huff
Huff
Huff
CRACKLE

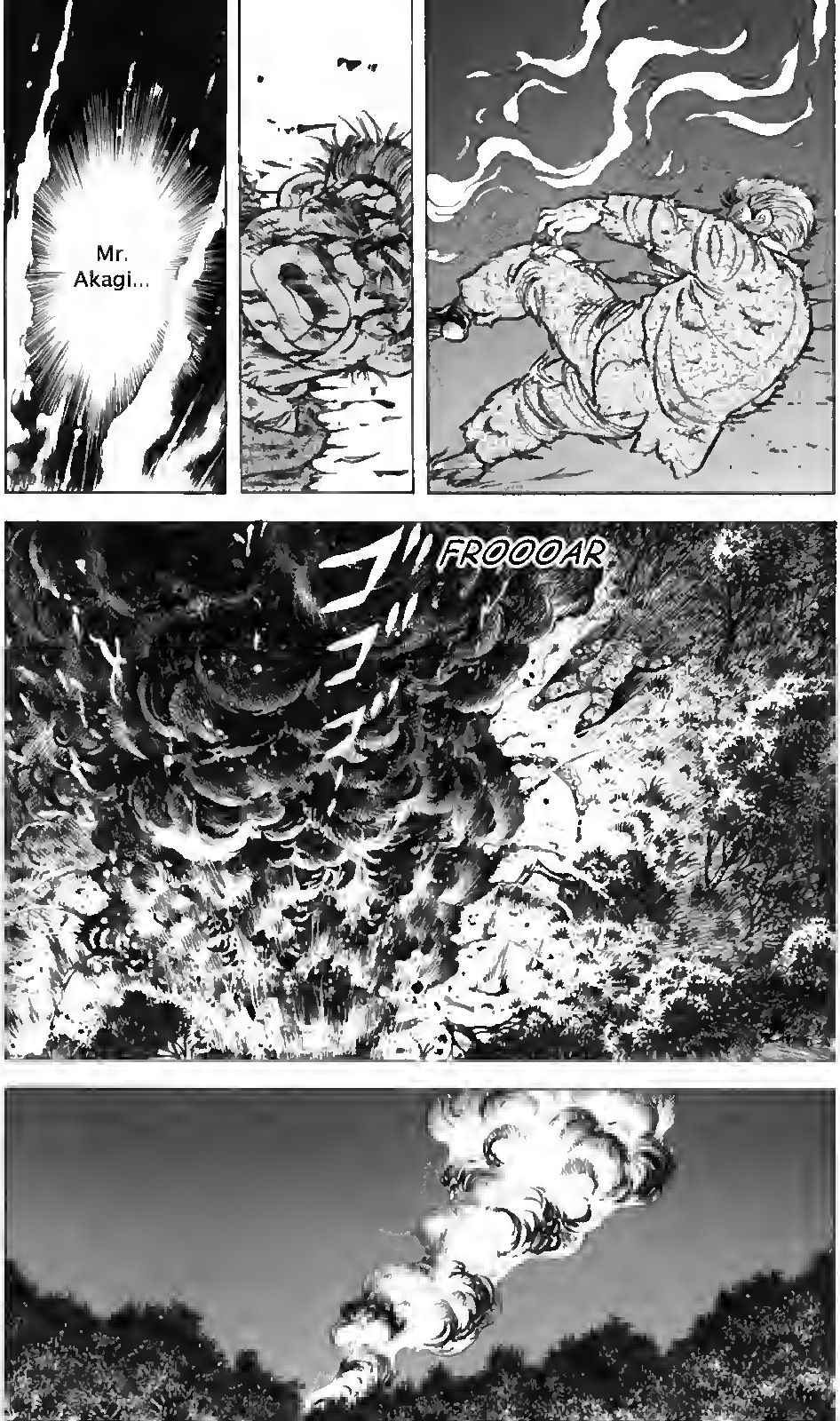
Still in the car...
I've got to get them back.

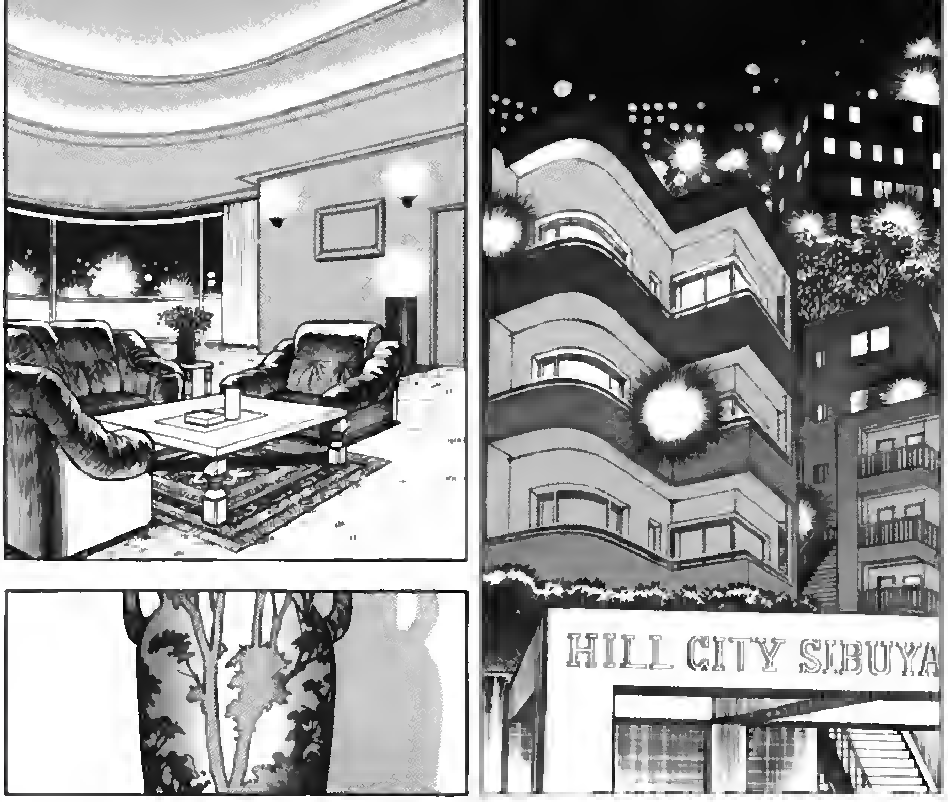
Wait ...
My bag... Those negatives and the confession tape...!

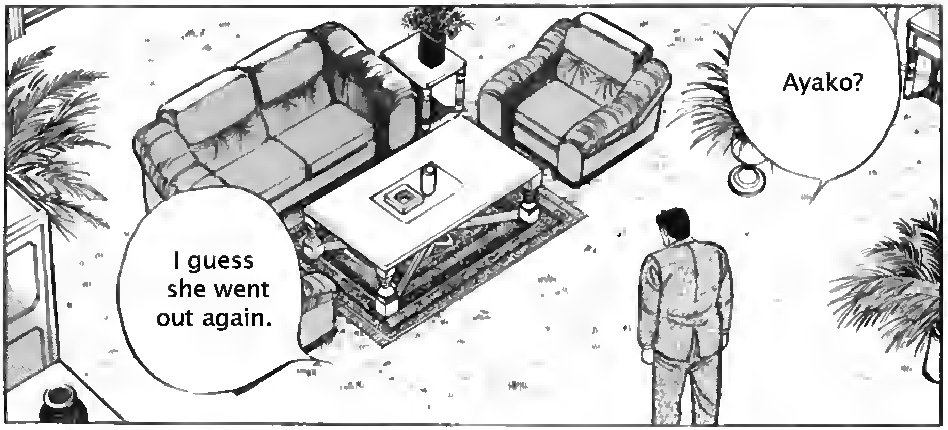
Huff
Huff

BOOOM

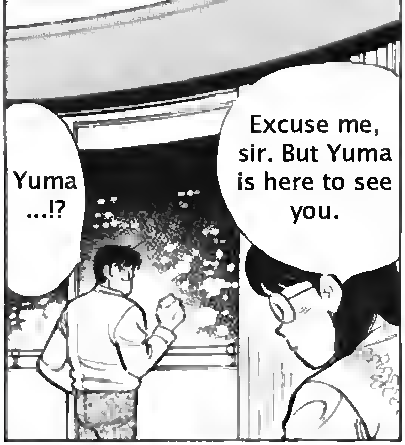
Dammit... Can't let them burn...


Mr. Akagi...
FROOOAR

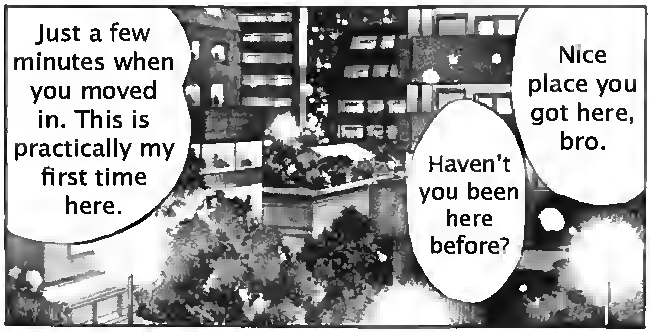

HILL CITY SHIBUYA

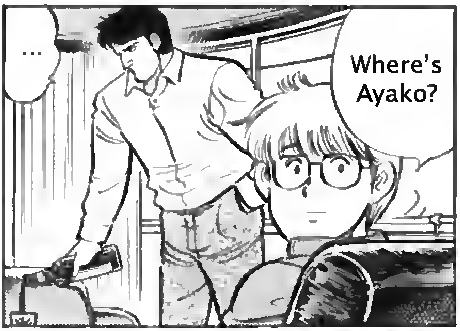

Ayako?
I guess she went out again.

But I'll take some brandy.
SHOOF
Nah.
Would you like some dinner, sir?

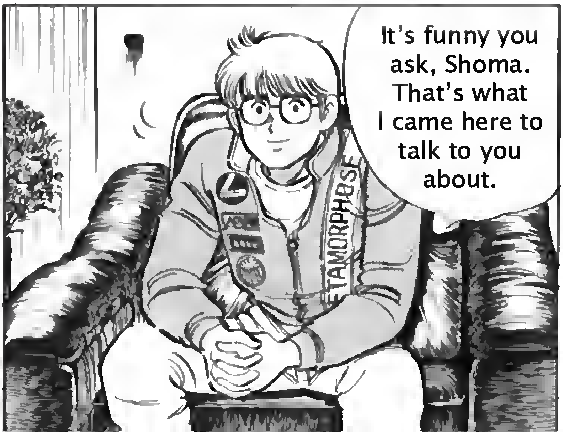

Yuma ...!?
Excuse me, sir. But Yuma is here to see you.

Yuki ...
GLINK


Just a few minutes when you moved in. This is practically my first time here.
Haven't you been here before?
Nice place you got here, bro.


...
Where's Ayako?

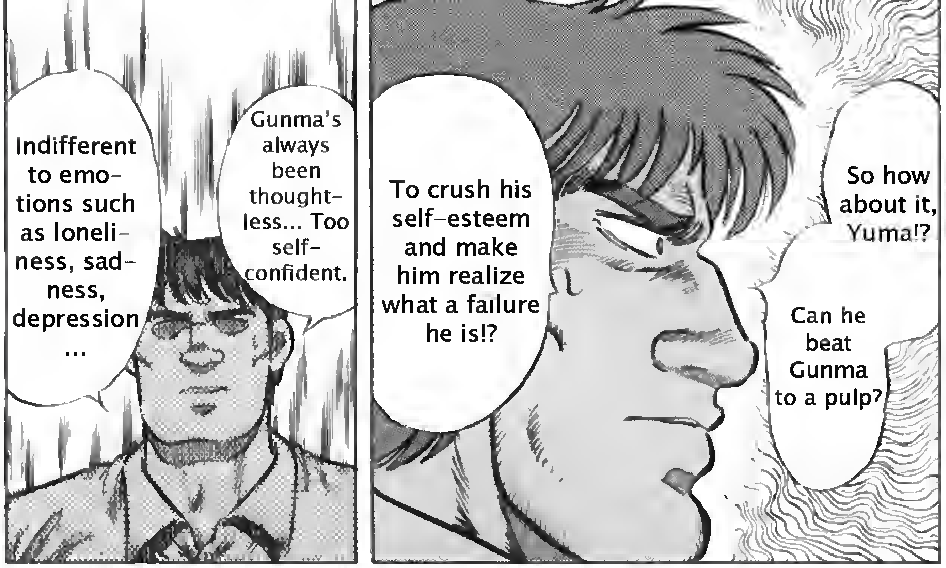
I'll have a little.
Wanna drink?
METAMORPHOSE

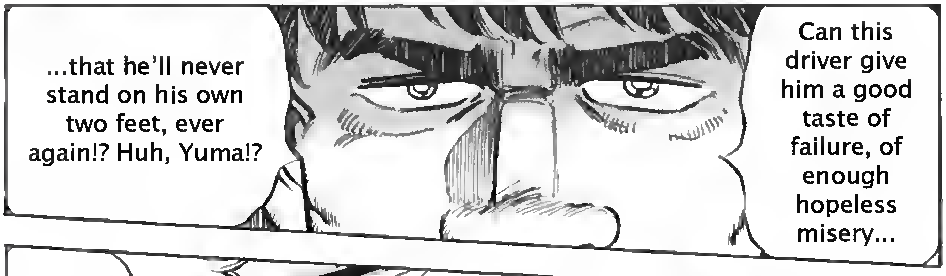

It's funny you ask, Shoma. That's what I came here to talk to you about.
METAMORPHOSE

Going well?
How's the racing business?

We want to break into F3000 in Europe soon.
...
Hmm ...
But to do that, we've got to beef up our team, and increase our budget to three or four times its current amount.
Yeah, and?
Come on, now. Aren't you a top executive at the Akagi Head Office?
As the third son of the Akagi family, I'm part of the upper management, but...
...in the end, I'm just a glorified ad manager.
I don't have the freedom to increase our budget, even a little, without causing problems.
That's why I came to you.
We're in the same boat.
It's basically me and a bunch of old timers on the board of directors.
No way! You're next in line for the presidency!

...
CHUG
Heh. Tell me about it.
Otoya Yama-guchi!
Who's that racer you've been grooming again?
What?
I mean, Gunma's not his only rival. Europe is full of great racers, and...
...Gun-ma?
Can he beat...
If not, no money for you!
If he can beat Gunma, you're covered.


Indifferent to emotions such as loneliness, sadness, depression ...
Gunma's always been thoughtless... Too self-confident.
To crush his self-esteem and make him realize what a failure he is!?
So how about it, Yuma!?
Can he beat Gunma to a pulp?

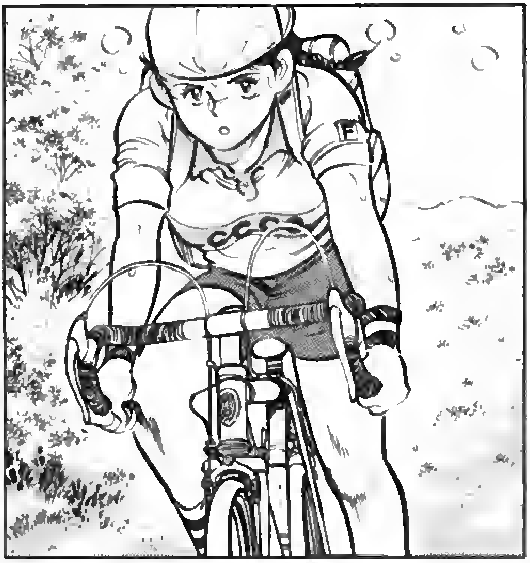

...that he'll never stand on his own two feet, ever again!? Huh, Yuma!?
Can this driver give him a good taste of failure, of enough hopeless misery...

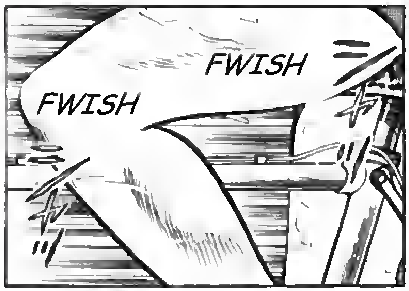
Any amount! You name it!
If he can do that, I'll give you whatever you ask for!
Shoma ...!?
Uh...

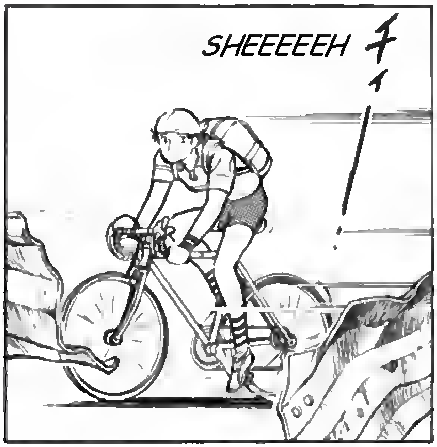
VRRRRRRRR
ゴォォ
...

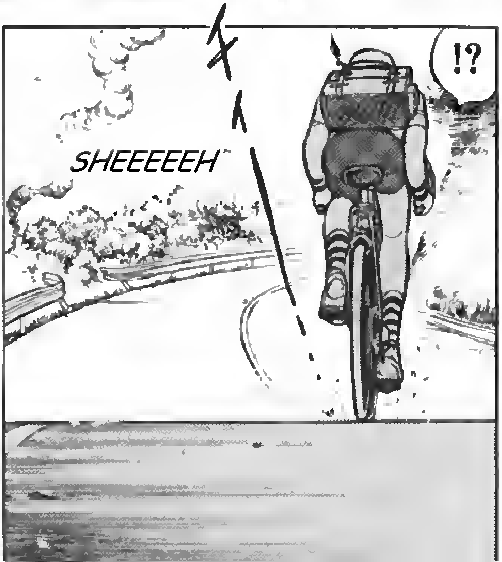
CHEEP
CHEEP
CHEEP
CHIRP
CHIRP

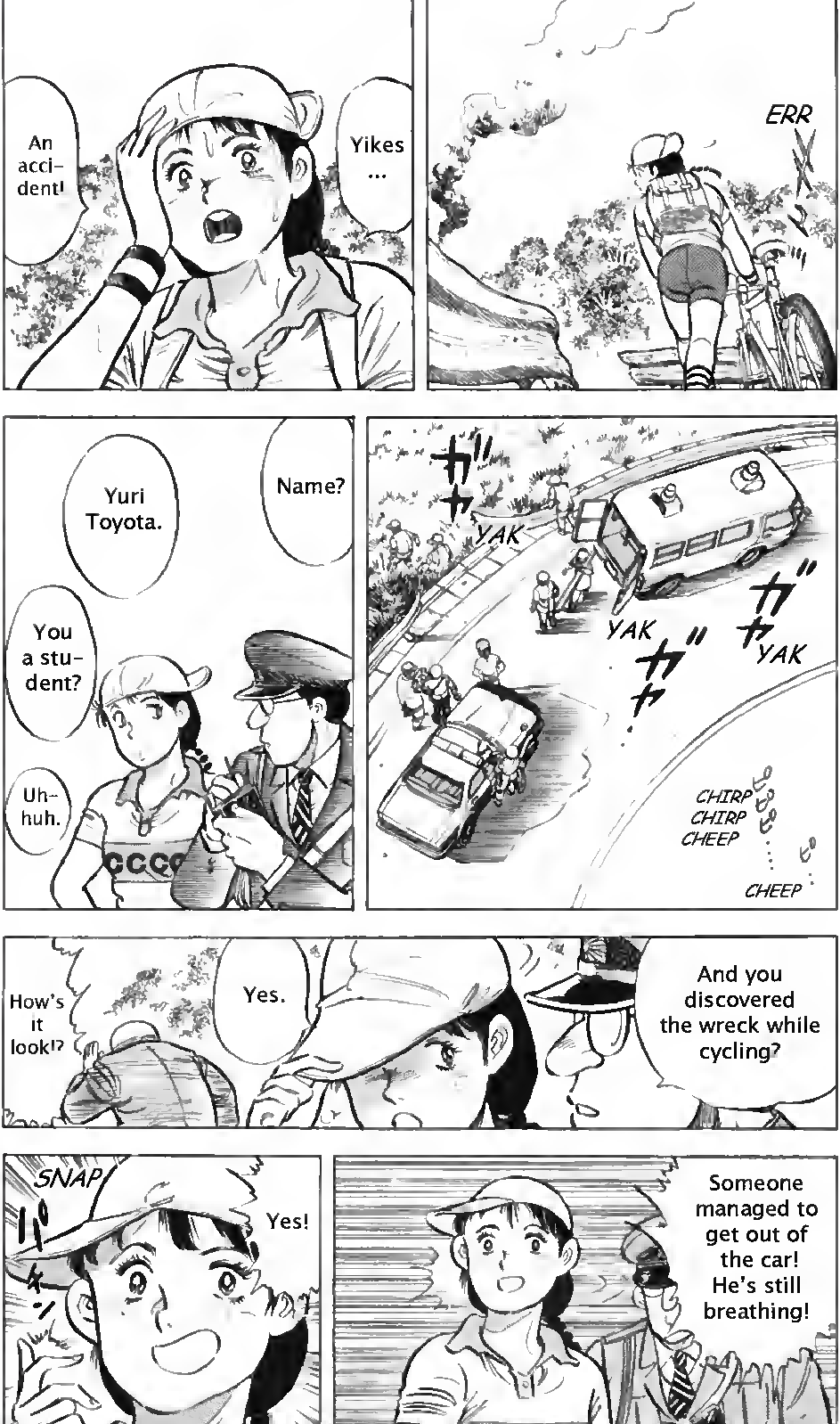
Huff
Huff
Huff




FWISH
FWISH

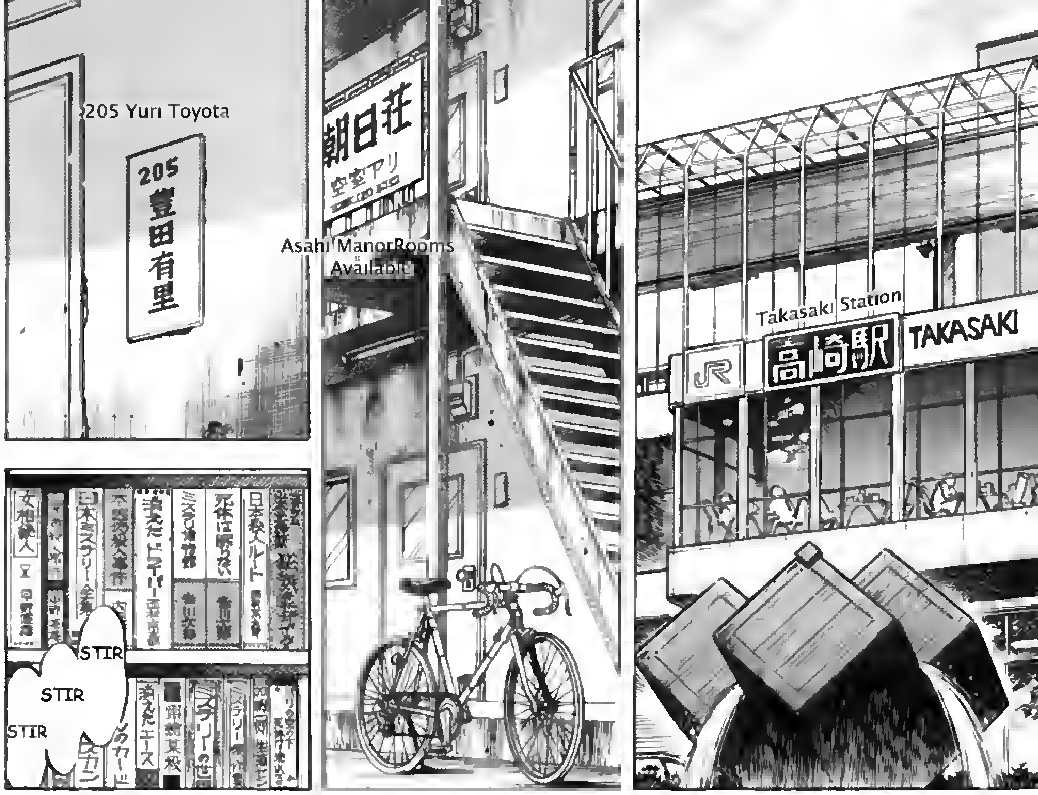

SHEEEEEH

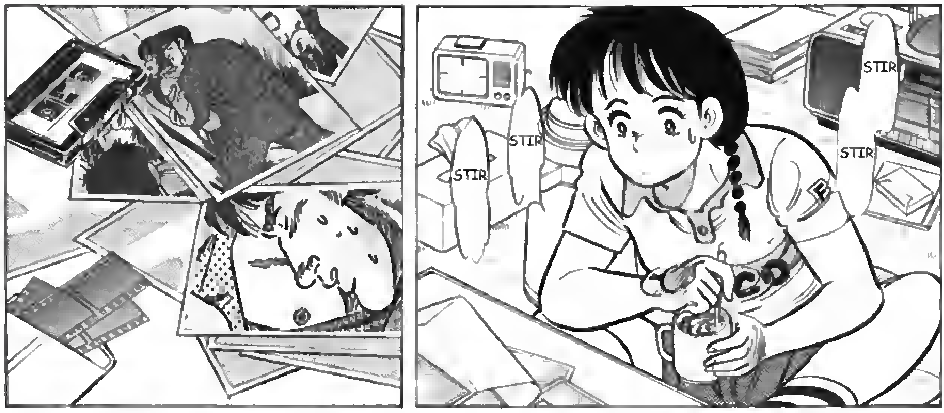

!?
SHEEEEEH


An acci-dent!
Yikes ...
ERR
Yuri Toyota.
Name?
You a stu-dent?
Uh-huh.
YAK
YAK
YAK
CHIRP
CHIRP
CHEEP
CHEEP
How's it look!?
Yes.
And you discovered the wreck while cycling?
SNAP
Yes!
Someone managed to get out of the car! He's still breathing!

Get a rope!
Easy now! Easy...
Hey! You can't go down there!
Why not? I found him!
Wrap that rope around him!
He's uncons-cious.
You okay, sir?
Eww... That's a lot of blood.
Don't... let anyone... get... my... bag...
!?
Bag?

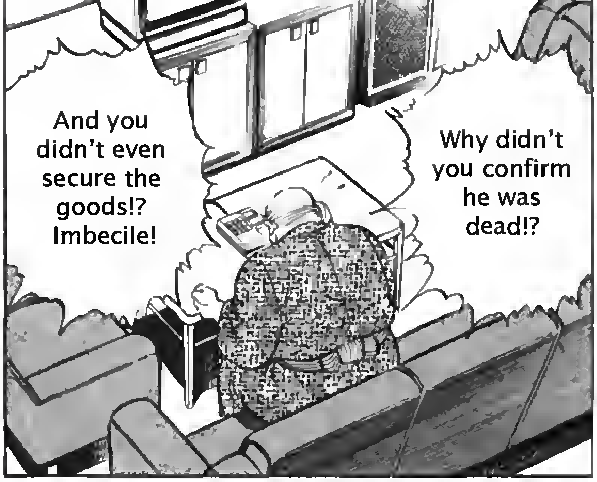
...
...
...
!
Women these days are so inquisi-tive ...
Wow... This is so thrilling!
Oh, right!
SWOOP
Hey! Would you get back up here!?

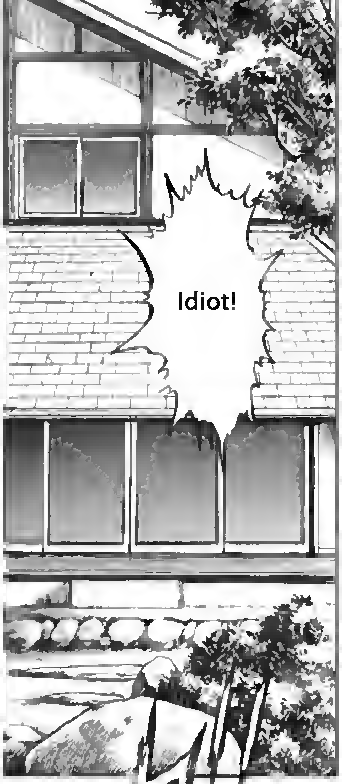

205 Yuri Toyota
205
豊田有里
朝日荘
空室アリ
Asahi ManorRooms
Available
Takasaki Station
JR
高崎駅
TAKASAKI
STIR
STIR
STIR

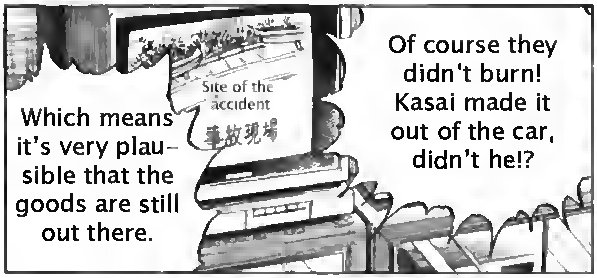

STIR
STIR
STIR
STIR

STIR
STIR
STIR
I knew it.
This is
serious.

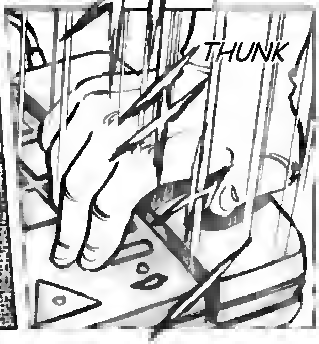
SLURP
I've got something really important here.
And so intriguing.
SHFFF
CLICK
REC PLAY
KUCHAK
Ahem ... Testing...
KRRRR
BEEEEP
I, Jiro Kida, promise to give my candid testimony regarding the truth behind Yuki's death...
This is really serious.
...after falling from the roof of the Akagi Head Office building.


And you didn't even secure the goods!? Imbecile!
Why didn't you confirm he was dead!?

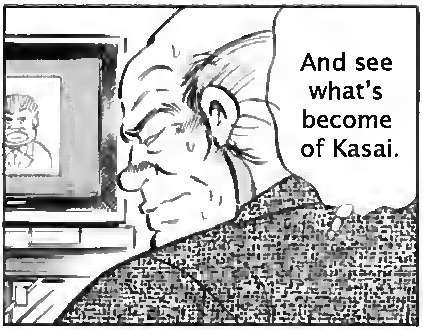

Idiot!

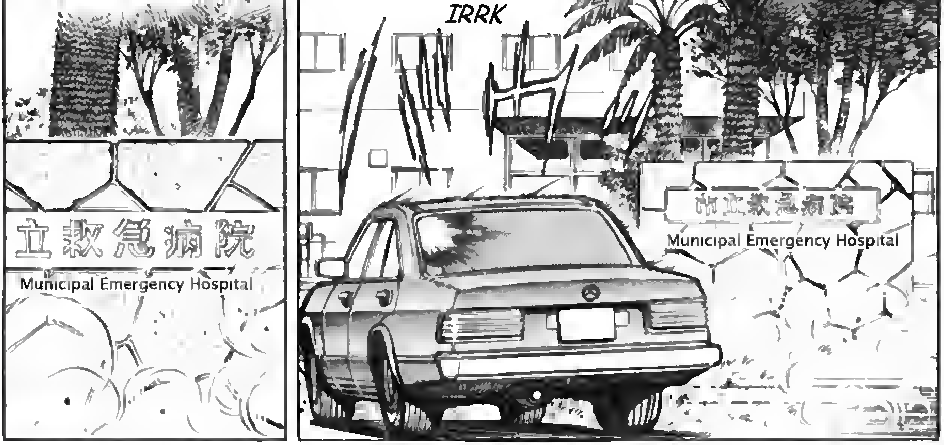

Site of the accident
Which means it's very plausible that the goods are still out there.
Of course they didn't burn! Kasai made it out of the car, didn't he!?

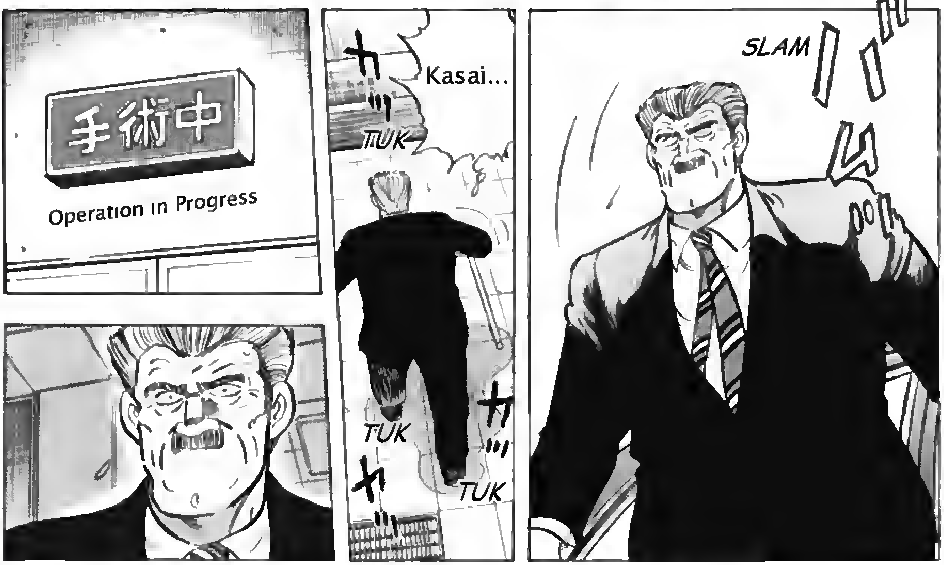
Now I've got to think up a way to manipulate Shoma.
What a screw up.


THUNK

I'm going out!


And see what's become of Kasai.

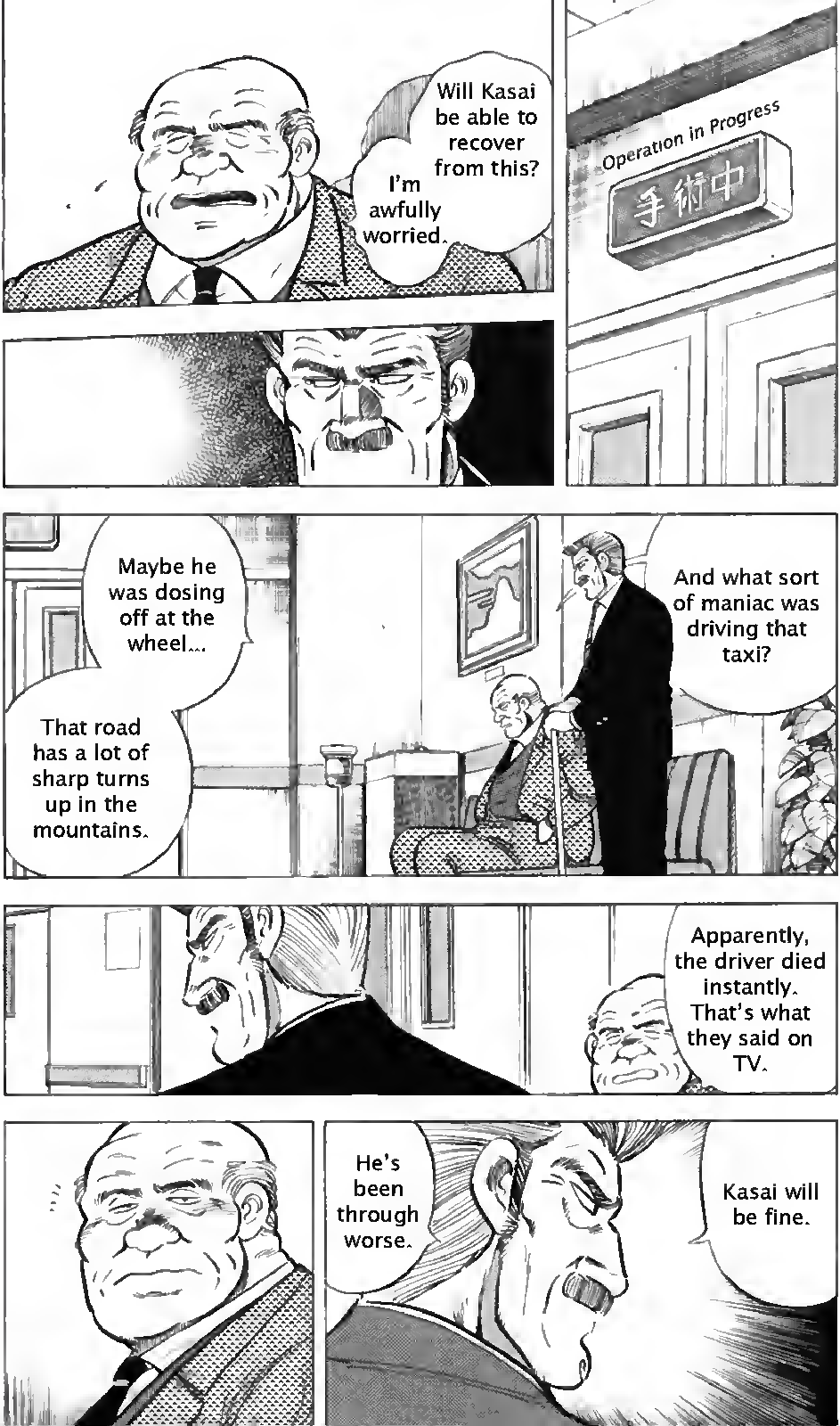

立救急病院
Municipal Emergency Hospital
IRRK
Municipal Emergency Hospital


手術中
Operation in Progress
Kasai...
TUK
TUK
TUK
TUK
SLAM

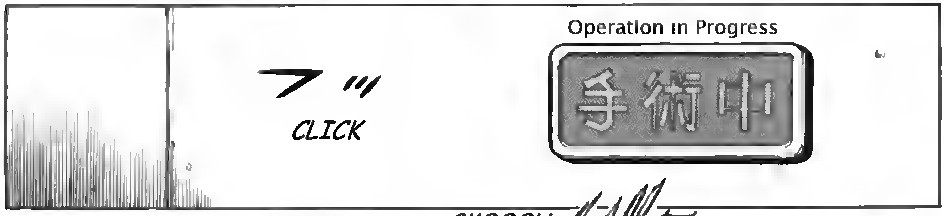
TUK
Uncle Tatsu... Could he have...
The timing was too good...
A driving accident!? Impossible...

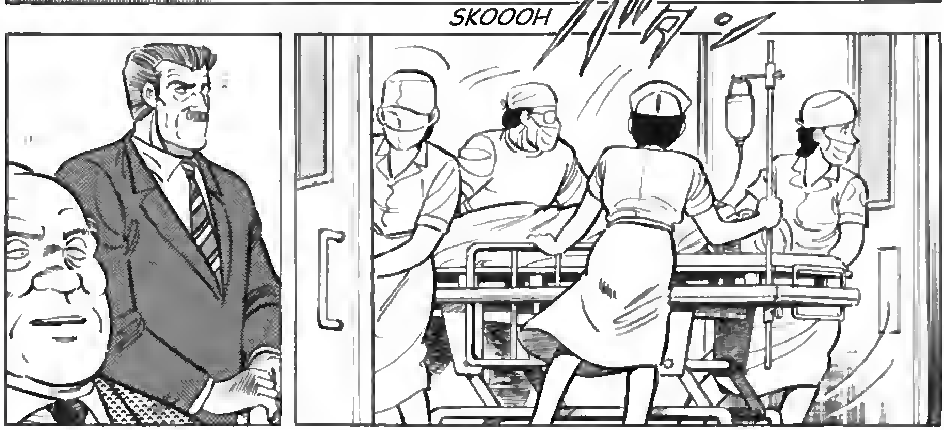
Operation in Progress
Soichi-ro!
What a tragedy... How is he doing?
I saw it on the news this morning. Just unbelievable...

Chapter 11:
Girl on a Bike

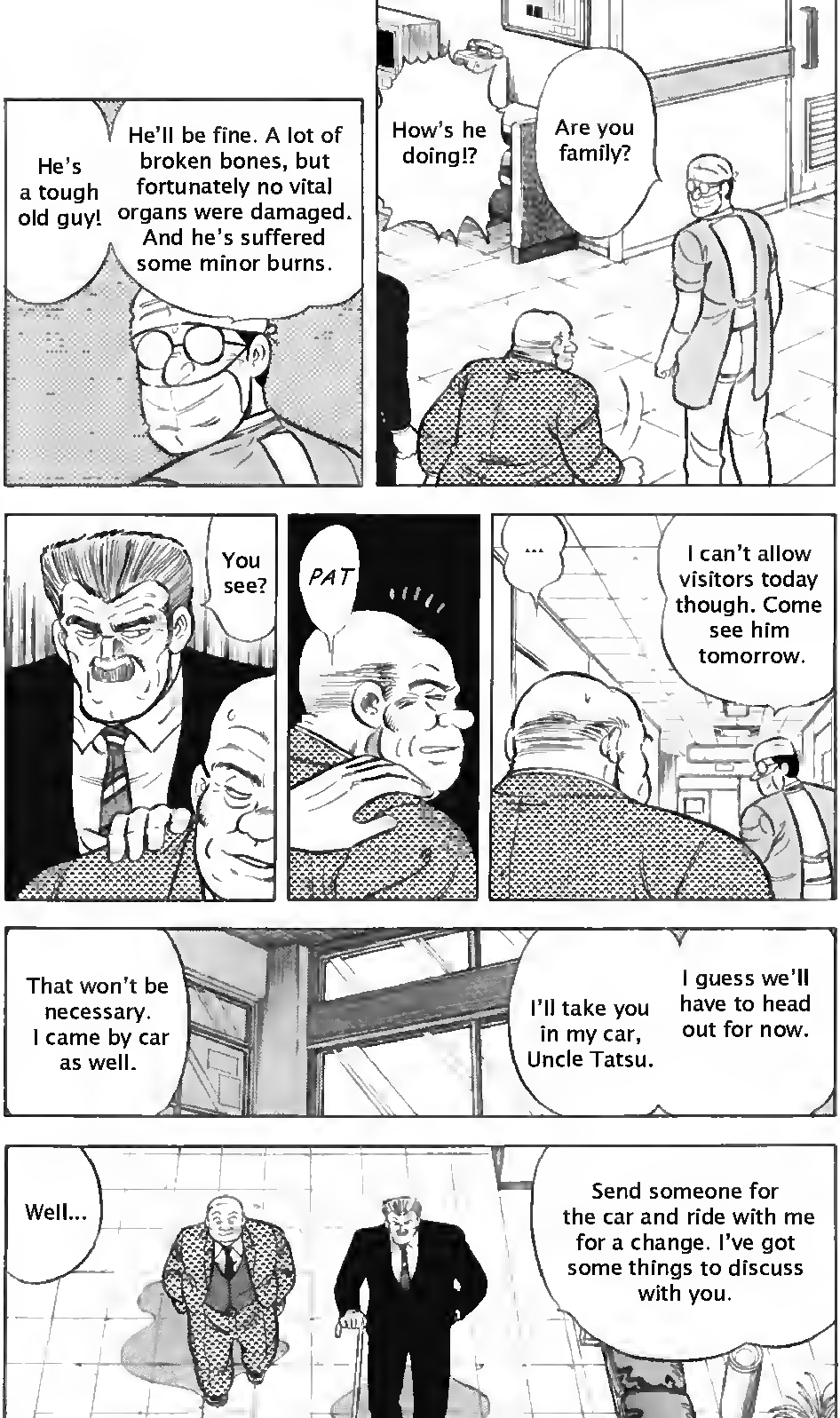

Will Kasai be able to recover from this?
I'm awfully worried.
Operation in Progress
手術中
Maybe he was dosing off at the wheel...
That road has a lot of sharp turns up in the mountains.
And what sort of maniac was driving that taxi?
Apparently, the driver died instantly. That's what they said on TV.
He's been through worse.
Kasai will be fine.

...
Even if some-body tears his limbs off!
...is some-one who doesn't up and die while he's still got things to do.
Uncle Tatsu, the defi-nition of a man...

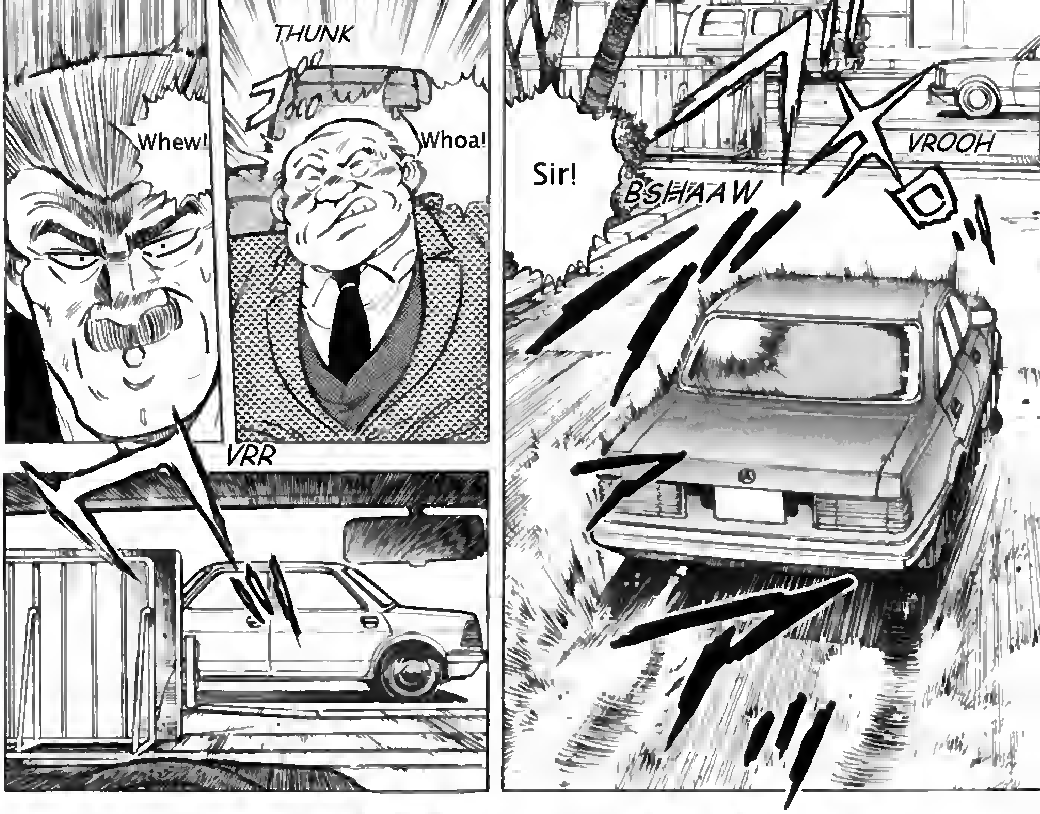

CLICK
Operation in Progress
手術中


SKOOOH

RATTLE
RATTLE

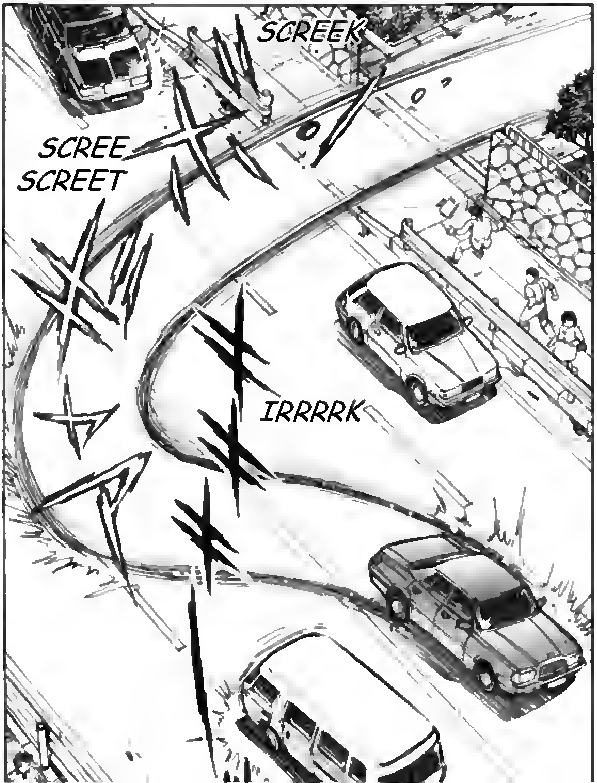

He'll be fine. A lot of broken bones, but fortunately no vital organs were damaged. And he's suffered some minor burns.
He's a tough old guy!
How's he doing!?
Are you family?
You see?
PAT
...
I can't allow visitors today though. Come see him tomorrow.
That won't be necessary. I came by car as well.
I'll take you in my car, Uncle Tatsu.
I guess we'll have to head out for now.
Well...
Send someone for the car and ride with me for a change. I've got some things to discuss with you.

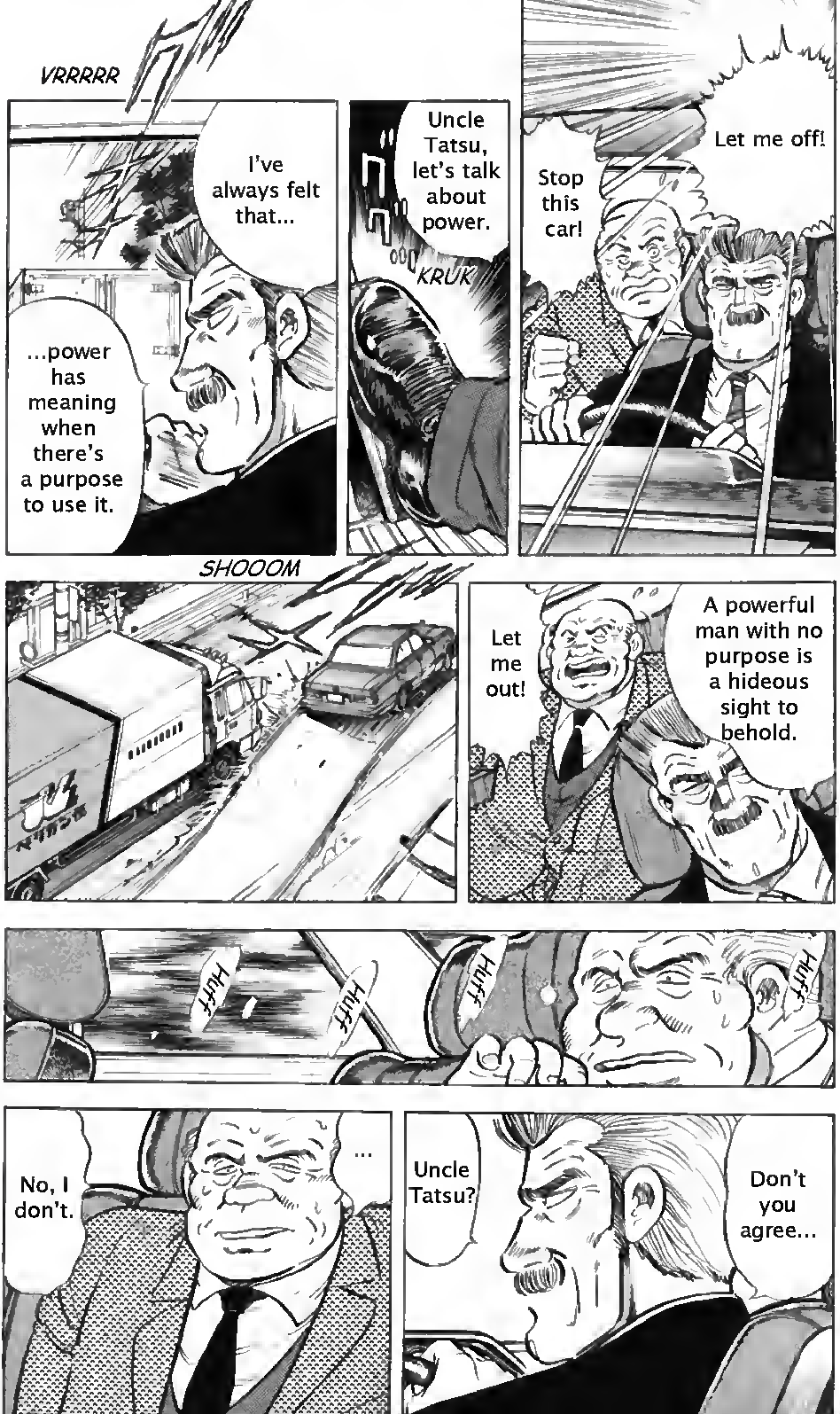
I um ...
I suppo- se I will.
Come on.
SLAM
Soichiro, don't tell me you're driving...
But sir...!
Great. You, take the train home.
I mean, you...
Why not?
Ha ha ha!
And use this thing to turn, right?
Push the gas to go, push the brake to stop.
Can you even... drive a car?
VROOM


THUNK
Whew!
Whoa!
VRR
Sir!
BSHAAW
VROOH

Soichiro
...

VRRRRR

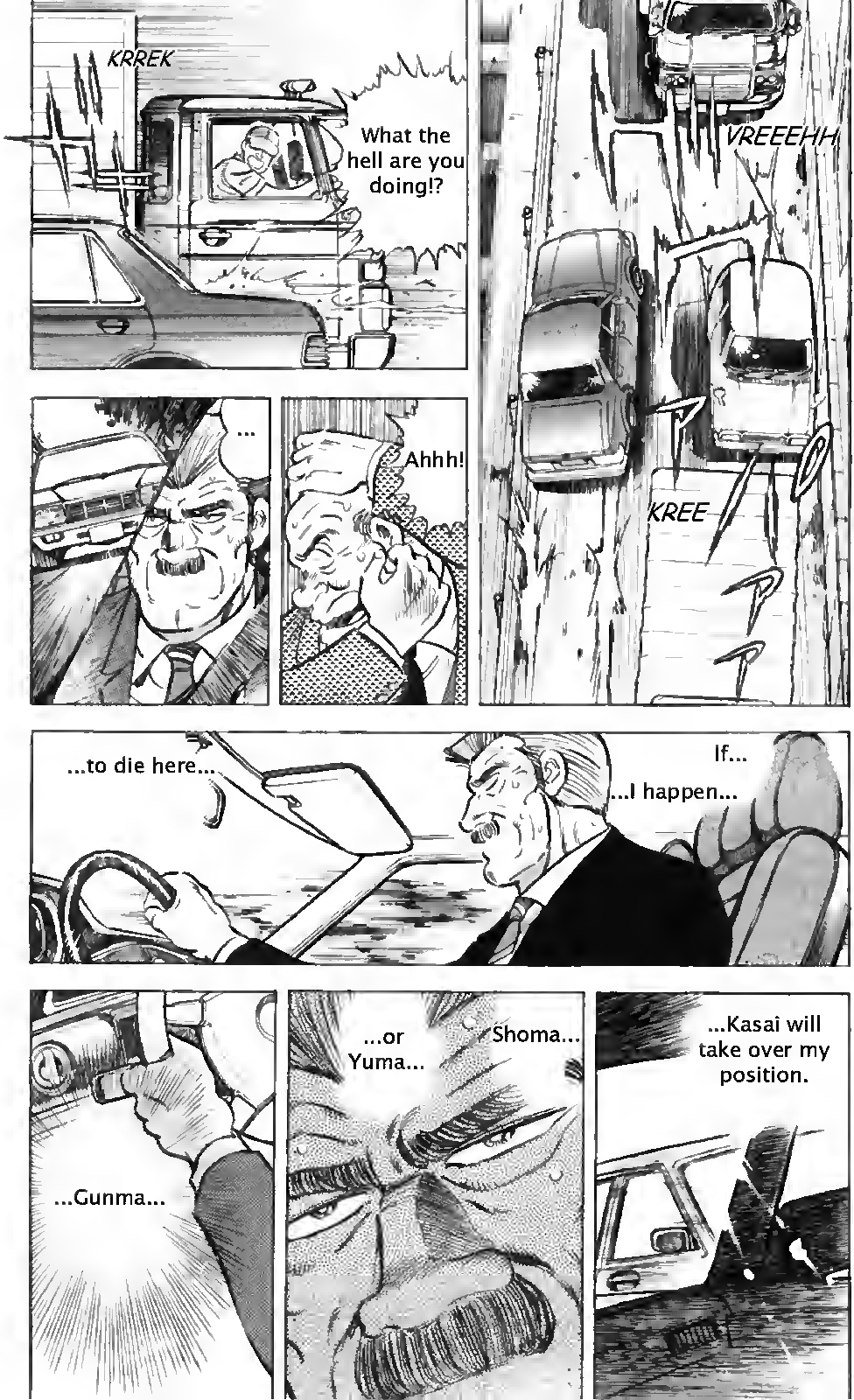

SCREEK
SCREE
SCREET
IRRRRK


VRRRRR
I've always felt that...
...power has meaning when there's a purpose to use it.
Uncle Tatsu, let's talk about power.
KRUK
Stop this car!
Let me off!
SHOOOM
Let me out!
A powerful man with no purpose is a hideous sight to behold.
HUFF
HUFF
HUFF
HUFF
No, I don't.
...
Uncle Tatsu?
Don't you agree...

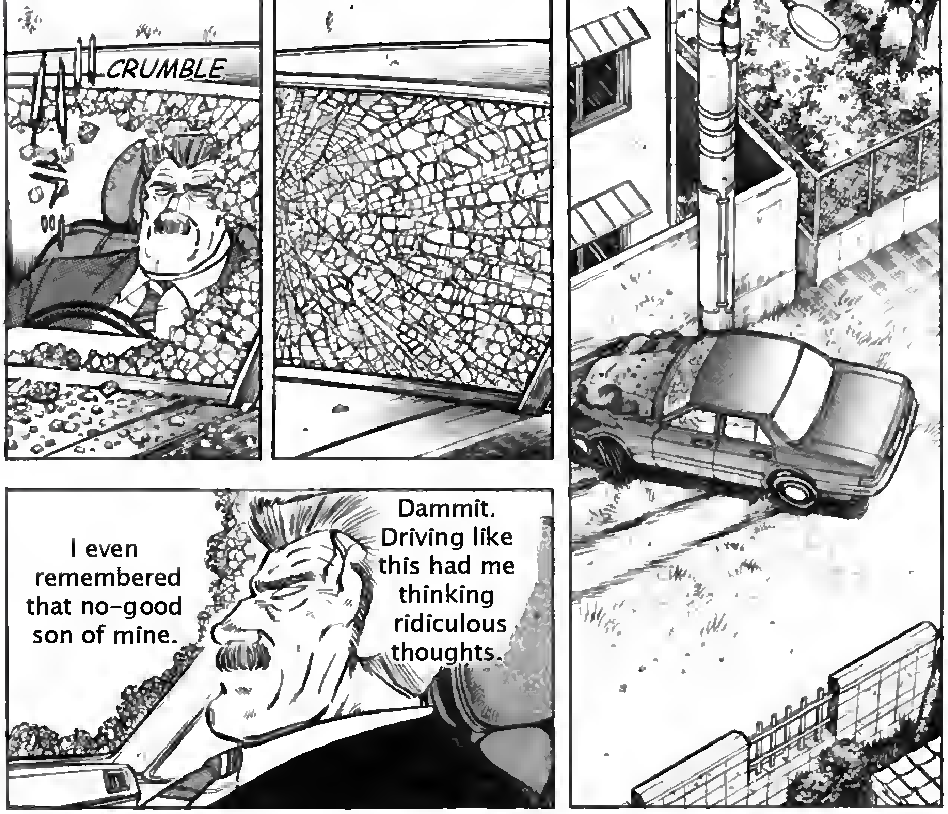
...a power-ful man simply has a lust for power.
In most cases ...
...maybe you includ-ed...
...are in the smallest of minorities.
Men with such lofty ideals...
How third-rate!
Indeed it is!
Of course, on the surface he has a grand vision, and all sorts of purpose.
But at the core, he has nothing more than the greed of a spoiled child.
...a sort of wild fantasy, that evokes a primal excitement within him.
That feeling of omnipo-tence it gives him...
...with third-rate people!
The word is filled...
Let me give you a piece of advice, Soichiro.
BUMP

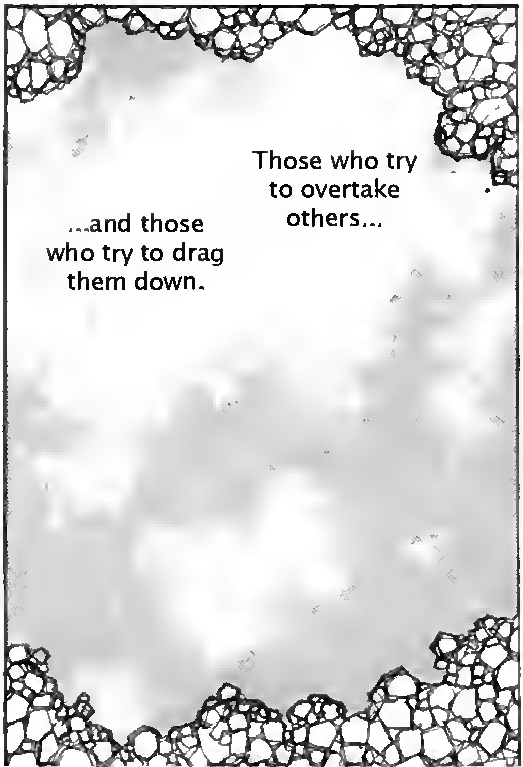
VROOOOO
...the third-rate folks hold a deep hatred for those close to them who are first-rate!
And...
Different than weak men like myself, only able to live a third-rate existence.
You're strong... Maybe a first-rate individual.
The "catch up to and overtake" mentality.
I get it...
Ha ha ha ha ha...
But I love you to death, Soichiro!
Those who try to overtake others, and those who try to drag them down.
There are two types of people in this case.
That's not all.
VROOOOOH
...

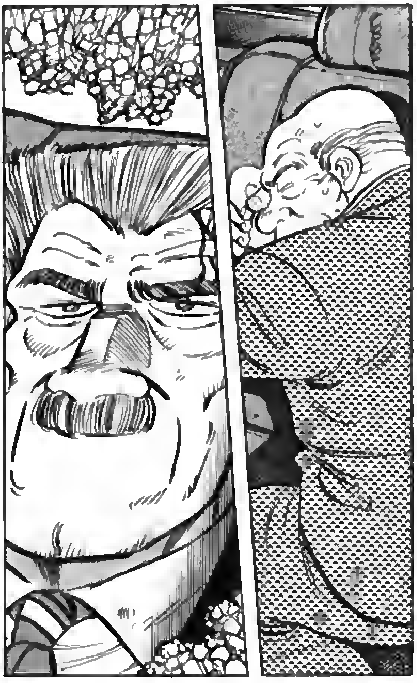
I'm impressed. I wasn't sure what that was...
Wha ...
Didn't you see that sign!?
It was a "No Entry"...
Stop! You're going the wrong way on a one way street!
Do you even have a licen-se!?
This is the first time I've driven in my life!
Ha ha ha...
VREHHHH
What!?
VROOH


KRREK
What the hell are you doing!?
VREEEHH
KREE
...
Ahhh!
...to die here...
If...
...I happen...
...Gunma...
...or Yuma...
Shoma...
...Kasai will take over my position.

Ridiculous...
Did I say Gunma...!?
SCREETCH
FROAAR
SCREECH
SCREEEETCH
THUD


CRUMBLE
I even remembered that no-good son of mine.
Dammit. Driving like this had me thinking ridiculous thoughts.


Those who try to overtake others...
...and those who try to drag them down.



Kasai (52), former president of Toho Chemicals, is promoted to Director of Akagi Head Office while recovering from an accident!

事故治療中の元東邦化学社長笠井氏(52)赤木商事本社取締役に！

Do they plan to advance to F1 in the middle of the season!?

A shocking promotion!

異例の抜擢人事！

Akagi Group Head Office

赤木グループ本社赤木商事

緊急臨時株主総会で決議

Decision made at urgent stockholders' meeting

Economic Times

経済界新聞

Team Metamorphose announces sudden entry into the European F3000!

Sports

スポーツ

チームメタモルフォーゼ ヨーロッパF-3000参戦を発表！

シーズン途中 F1参入計画 始動か!?

こりゃもう

At last

チーム体制も強化！

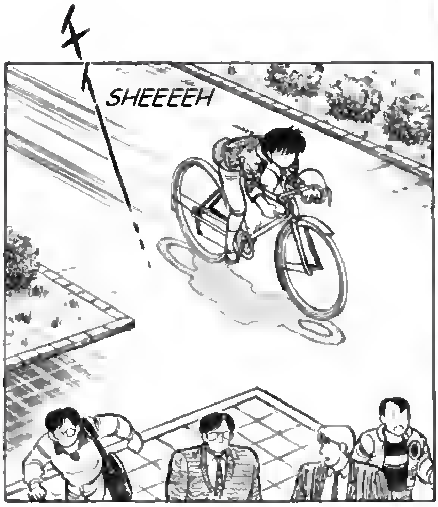
With a bigger and better team!

"We're not thinking about F1 just yet. This transition to Europe is just a result of boredom from racing in Japan so long."

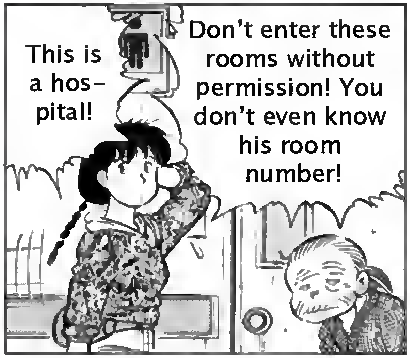
We interviewed the team's representative Yuma Akagi, backed by enormous funding, on his plans behind this move.

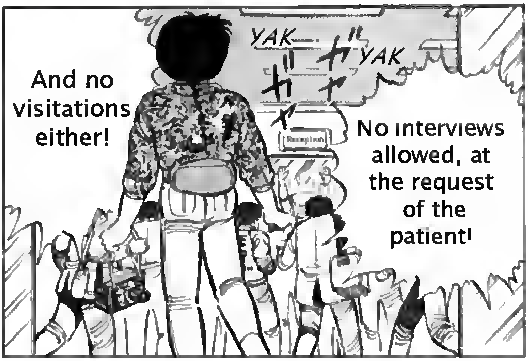
SHEEEEH

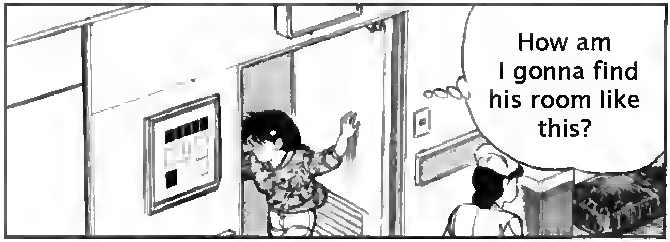
チィ

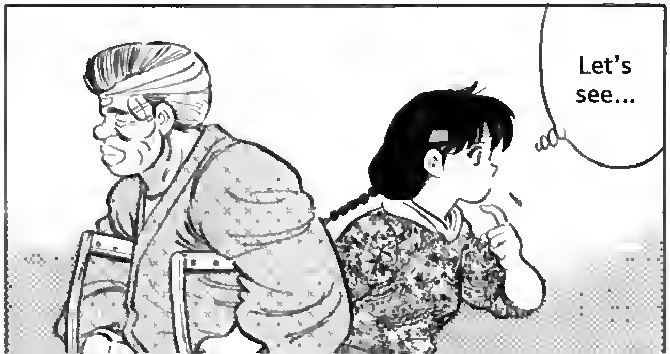

SHEEEEH

Municipal Emergency Hospital
市立救急病院
SHEEEEH


This is a hos-pital!
Don't enter these rooms without permission! You don't even know his room number!


YAK
YAK
And no visitations either!
No interviews allowed, at the request of the patient!


How am I gonna find his room like this?

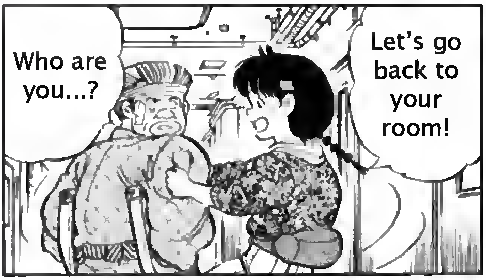

Let's see...

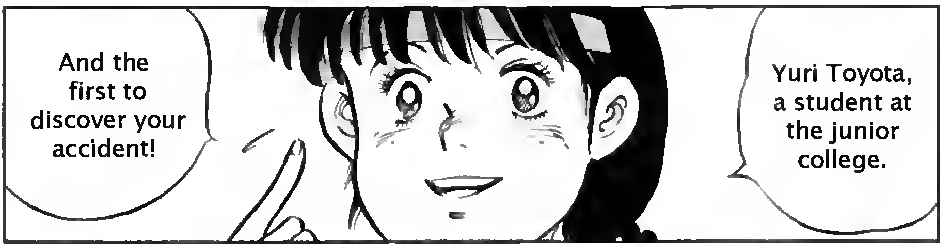
TUK
TUK
TUK
What a mess.

...!?
It's you!
Hey ...

You can't be walking around out here!
There's a whole mess of reporters downstairs trying to get to you.

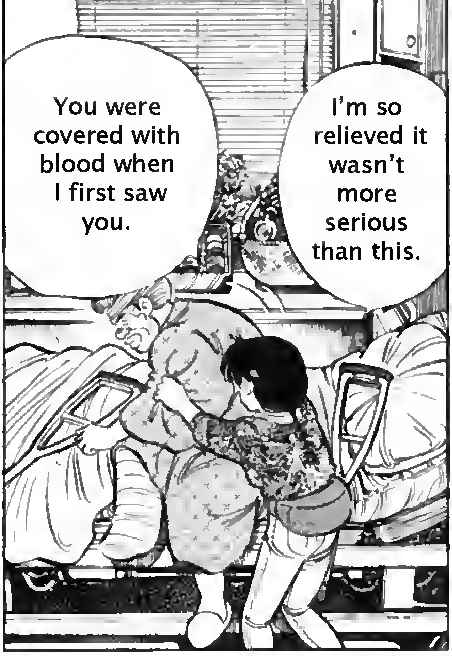
You're Mr. Kasai, right!?
You fell off the cliff in that car.
I'm so glad to see you're walking again!

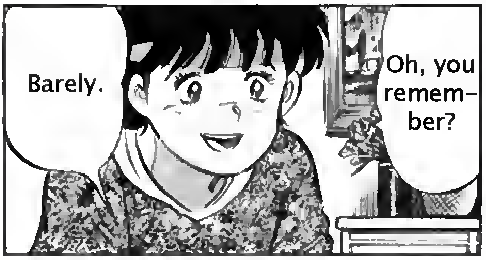

Who are you...?
Let's go back to your room!


And the first to discover your accident!
Yuri Toyota, a student at the junior college.

...it's you.
Then ...

Did we exchange words there...
...by any chance?

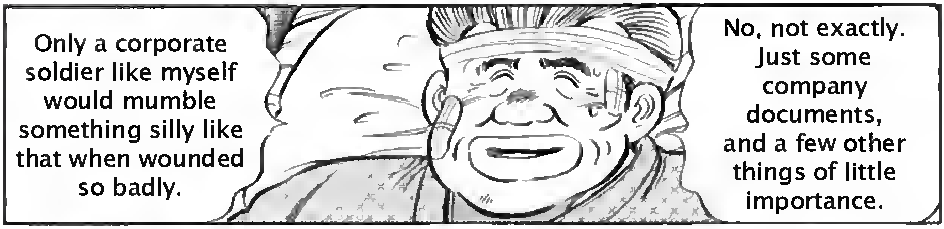

You were covered with blood when I first saw you.
I'm so relieved it wasn't more serious than this.


Oh, you remember?
Barely.

Did you have something important in that bag?

...

Something about your bag.
And not to let anyone have it.


Only a corporate soldier like myself would mumble something silly like that when wounded so badly.
No, not exactly. Just some company documents, and a few other things of little importance.

I knew he'd lie about it.

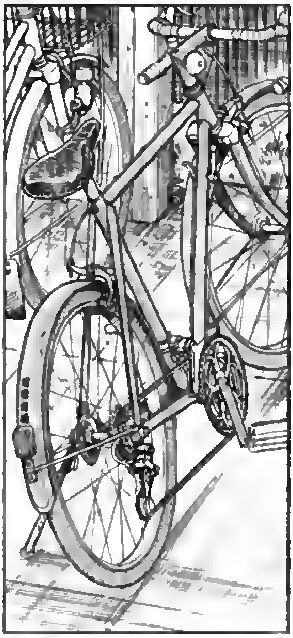
...
Ha ha ha...

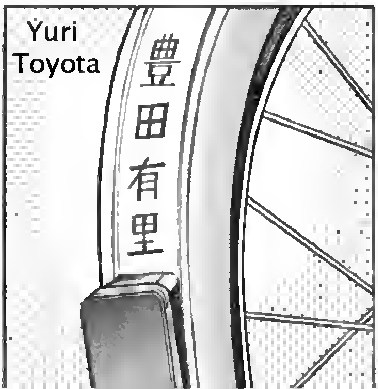
...
I mean, it's not a big deal either way.
But... You didn't happen to see it out there, did you?

I knew it. This is worth checking into.
It probably went up in flames with that car!
Your important bag was nowhere to be found, sir!

So she just might have what we're looking for.

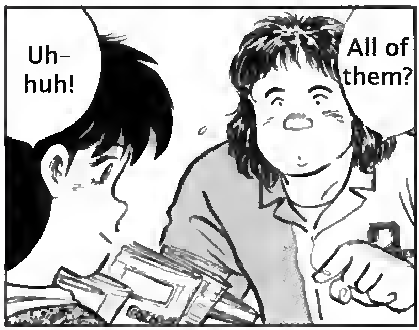
Find a girl named Yuri Toyota, the first one to find the accident. She even got a good, close look at the wreck!

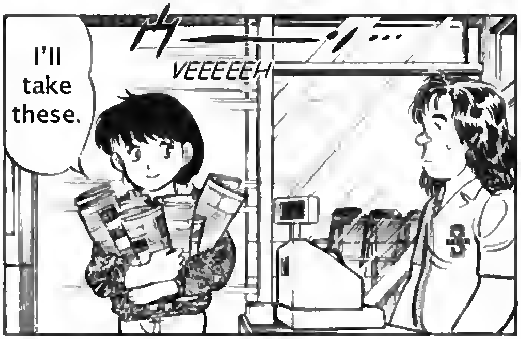



Yuri Toyota
豊田有里

Chapter 12: Fleeing Yuri

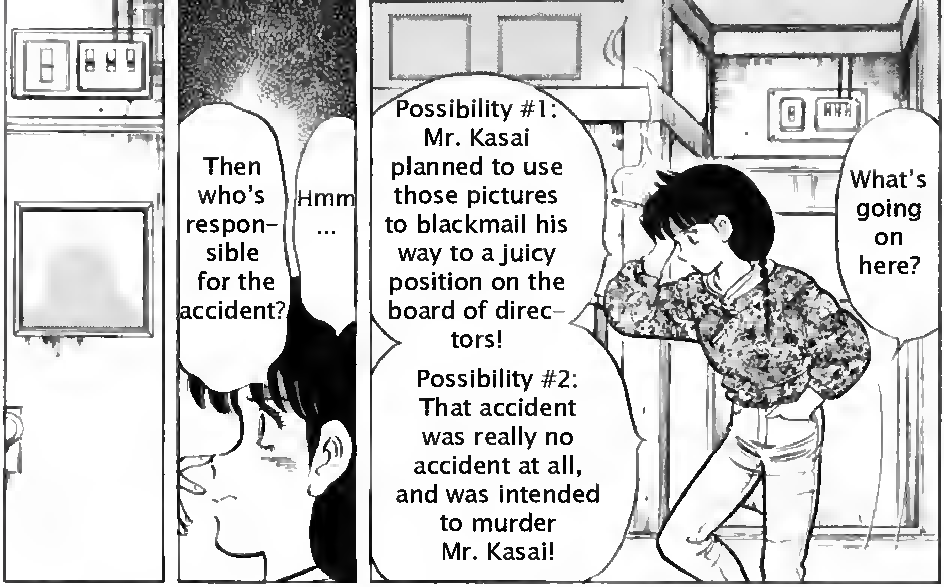
NUMBER
FOOD

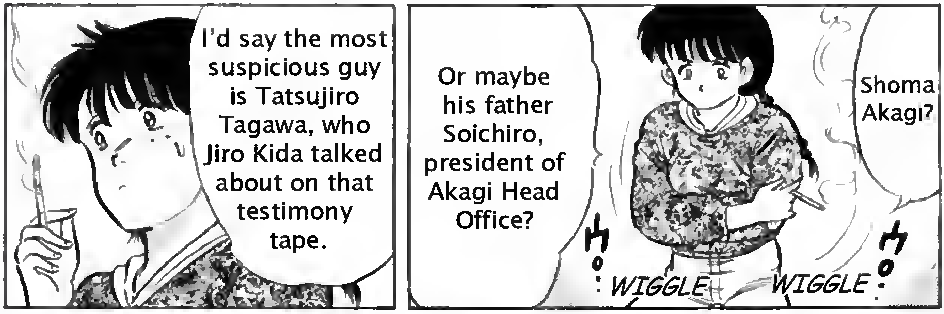

Uh-huh!
All of them?

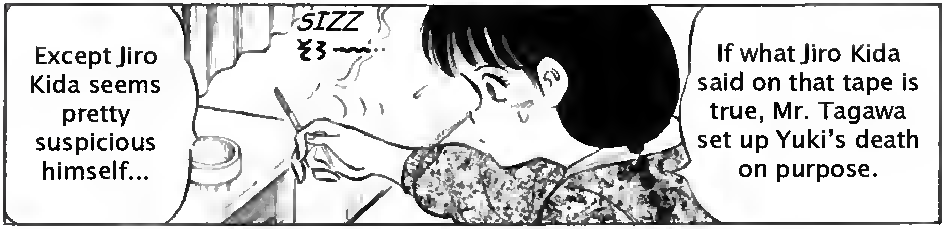

I'll take these.
VEEEEEH

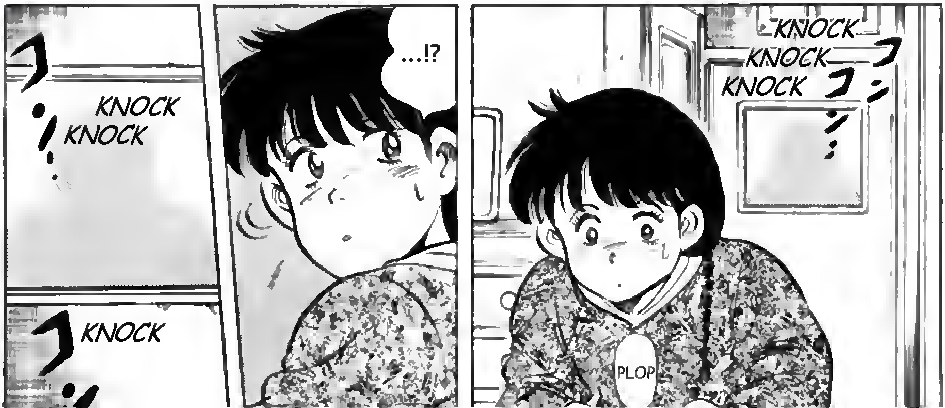
カシ
TUK
明日荘
TUK
カシ
TUK
カシ
TUK
カシ
This is...
パタン
SLAM
Hey...
What's this... "Kasai, former president of Toho Chemicals, was suddenly appointed to the Akagi Head Office board of directors at an emergency stockholders meeting. The initial press conference was held at the hospital he was admitted to."
Akagi Group... Isn't that a huge corporate group?
赤木商事本社
笠井取締役就任会見
...the guy from the accident.
Akagi Group Head Office
Kawai appointed to board of directors

...from the pictures!
It's that guy...
Hey!
Hmm...
Wow... This keeps getting better and better.
TUK.
SHFFF
Now he's got this big promotion!
...and narrowly escapes death.
Mr. Kasai, in possession of dirty pictures of Shoma Akagi with a girl named Yuki, and a tape of Jiro Kida's confession, suddenly gets in an accident...

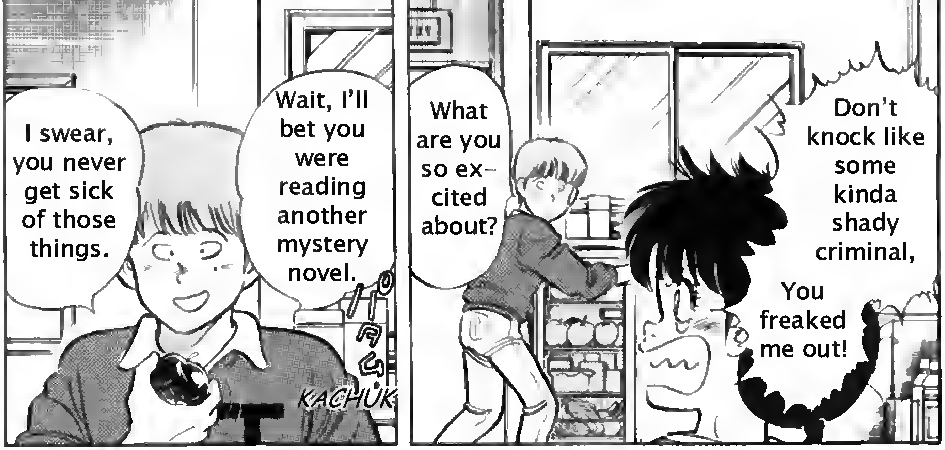

Then who's responsible for the accident?
Hmm...
Possibility #1: Mr. Kasai planned to use those pictures to blackmail his way to a juicy position on the board of directors!
Possibility #2: That accident was really no accident at all, and was intended to murder Mr. Kasai!
What's going on here?

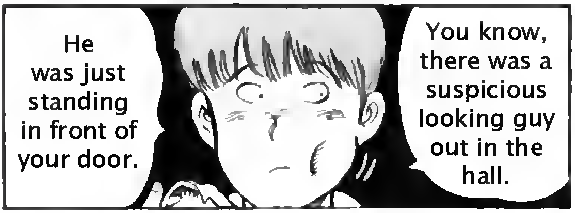

I'd say the most suspicious guy is Tatsujiro Tagawa, who Jiro Kida talked about on that testimony tape.
Or maybe his father Soichiro, president of Akagi Head Office?
Shoma Akagi?
WIGGLE
WIGGLE


Except Jiro Kida seems pretty suspicious himself...
SIZZ
If what Jiro Kida said on that tape is true, Mr. Tagawa set up Yuki's death on purpose.


KNOCK
KNOCK
KNOCK
...!?
KNOCK
KNOCK
KNOCK
PLOP

KNOCK
KNOCK
...is it?
Who ...
It might be the criminal, here to get that bag!
Who's there!?
KACHUK
I forgot to lock it!
Oh no...
What's wrong?
Hm?
Yusuke ...
Yu...
WOBBLE
WOBBLE
WOBBLE
PLUNK
WOBBLE
Could ya fix me something to eat, Yuri?
Ugh... I lost at pachinko again.
WRIGGLE
WRIGGLE


I swear, you never get sick of those things.
Wait, I'll bet you were reading another mystery novel.
KACHUK
What are you so excited about?
Don't knock like some kinda shady criminal,
You freaked me out!


He was just standing in front of your door.
You know, there was a suspicious looking guy out in the hall.

But when he saw me, he panicked and scurried off.
Describe him to me!

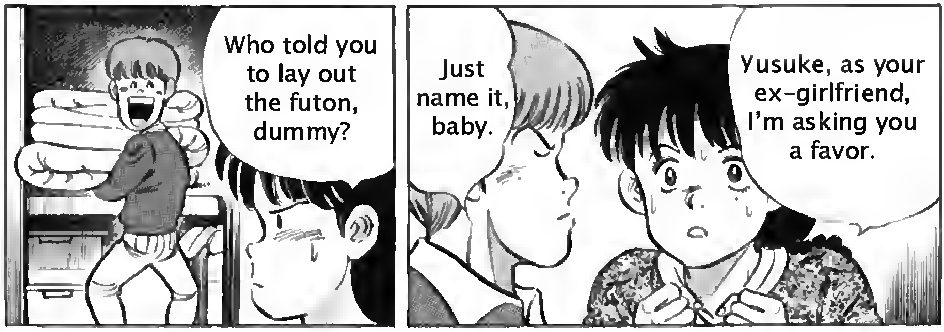
CRUNCH
So who's the author this time? Let me read it when you're done, sounds like a good one!
It's not a novel, it's reality!

!

WHISH
I didn't get a good look.

Huh?
I'm gonna disappear for a while, Yusuke.
I don't know him.
Yeah, there he is. Some kinda bill collector maybe?

And uhh... I'll join you.
I think you better lay down, you're kinda feve-rish.
You feeling okay?
Someone might be trying to kill me. It's too dangerous to stay here!


Who told you to lay out the futon, dummy?
Just name it, baby.
Yusuke, as your ex-girlfriend, I'm asking you a favor.

KACHUK

TUK
SWOOSH
TUK
TUK
GLANCE
GLANCE
She's getting away.
Hey!
SHOOM
Wow ...
...he really was after me.
Dam-mit.
SHOOH
Keep him busy, Yusuke.
Now's my chance.

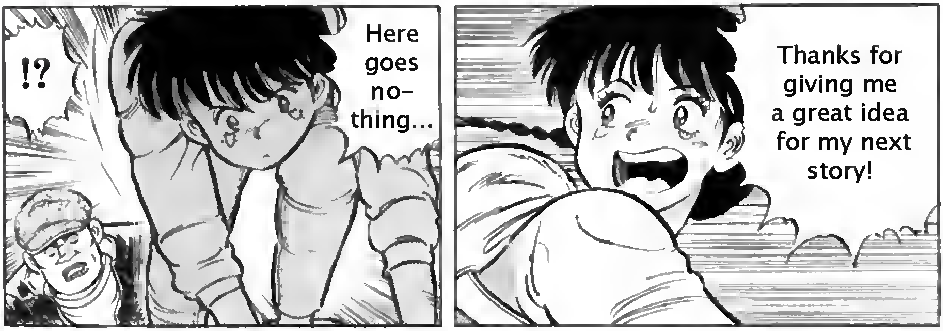
Damn she's fast...
FWOOH
You'll never catch me!
Heh heh!
Come on!
SWOOSH
Hey!
!
Huh?
Oh crap...
Owww!
Why did you come this way, Yusuke!?
BANG

Outta the way!
When did she get on a bike?
Whoa, what the hell...!?
FWISH
FWISH
FWISH
No way...
...
Give it back!
PAREHHHHM
Now I got ya!
REHHHHH

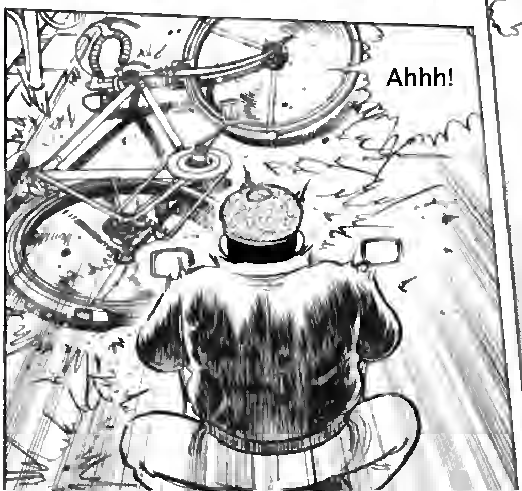
I'll give you a million yen for that bag! How about it!?
Hey girlie!
Gotta speed up!
...
Shoot, I'll even give you three million!
Okay, two million then.
The monthly mystery story amateur award is two million!
SCREEECH
Not a chance!
SHEEH
Little bitch...

Crap, he won't give up!
SMACK
FWISH
FWISH
FWISH
REHHHHH
This is bad...
And no side roads...
Oh no, there's a deserted road up ahead...
Bad idea comin' here. This'll be easy.
HONDA
FWISH
FWISH
BRREHHHHH

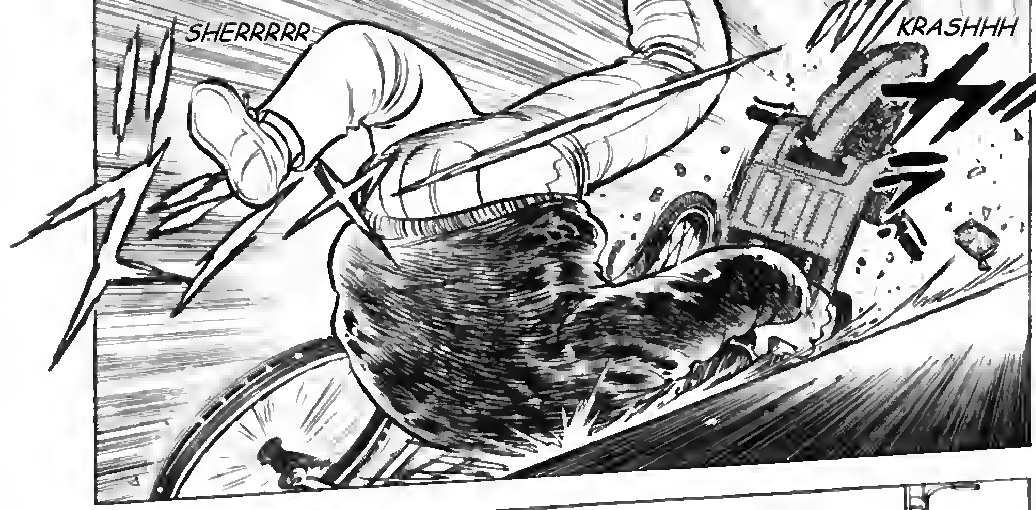
Otherwise I'll have to kill ya!
Gimme the bag!
It's all over, missy!

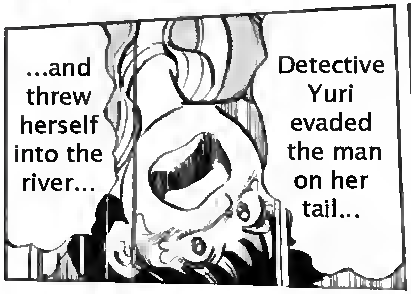

!?
Here goes no-thing...
Thanks for giving me a great idea for my next story!

KUCHUNK
What the...!?


Ahhh!

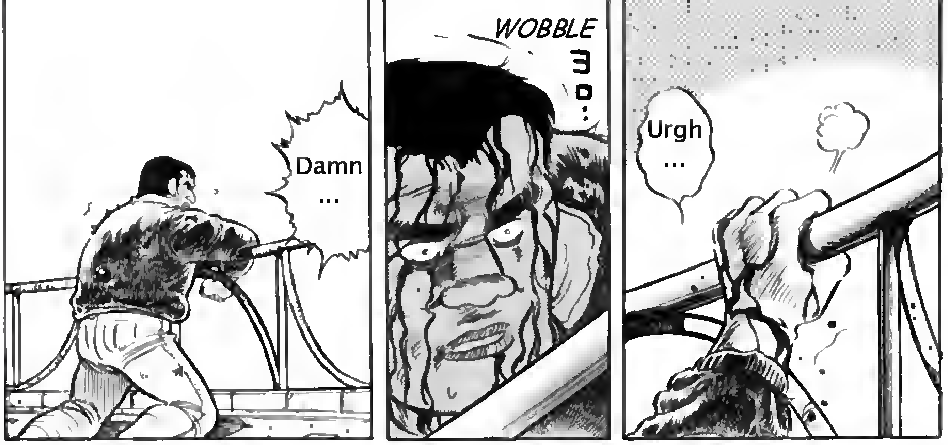
Woohoo!
TCHAK

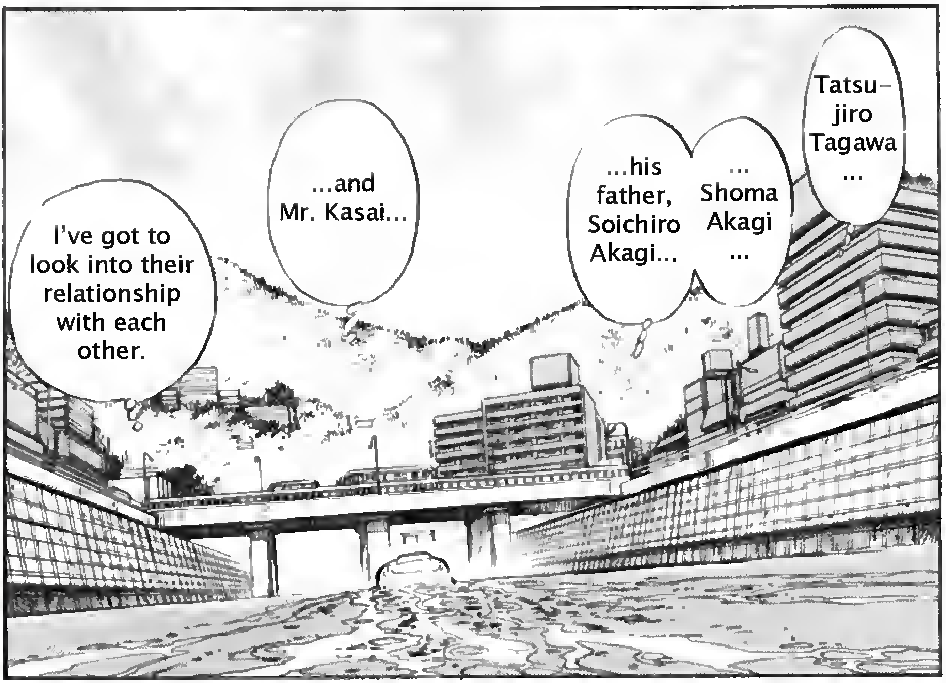

SHERRRRR
KRASHHH


...and threw herself into the river...
Detective Yuri evaded the man on her tail...

SLAM

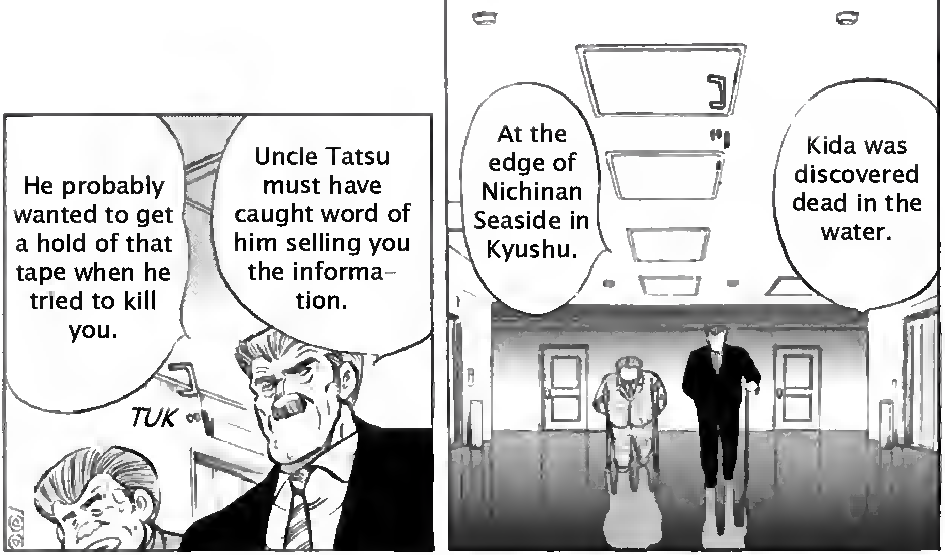
SPLASH

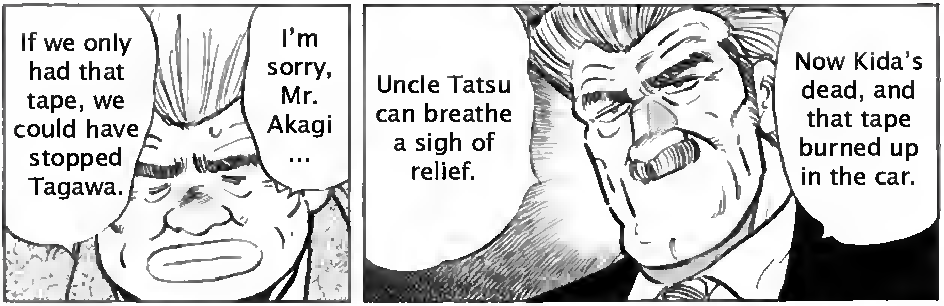

Damn ...
WOBBLE
Urgh ...

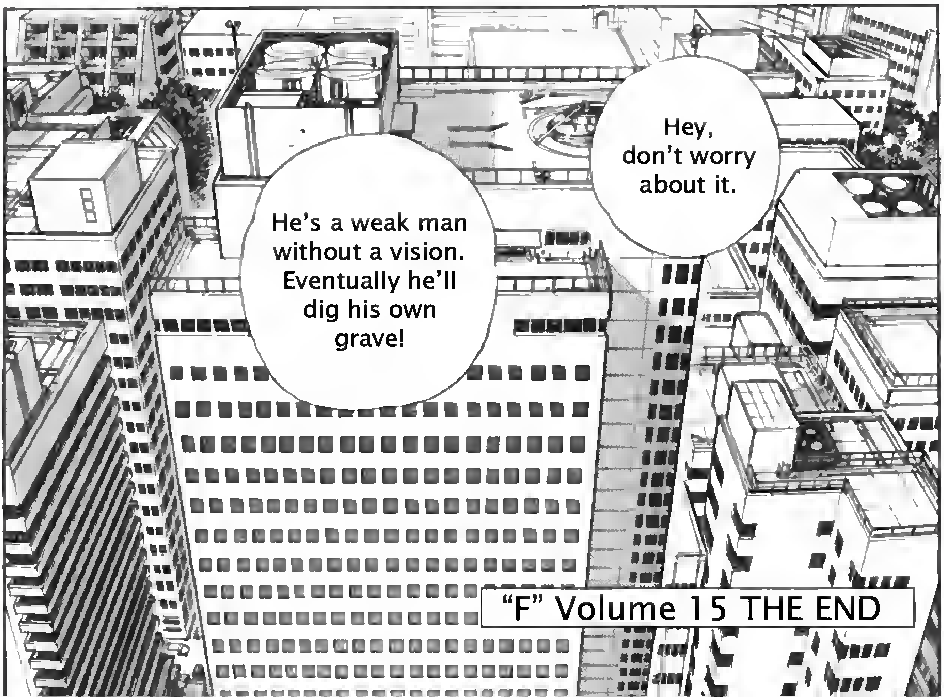

I've got to look into their relationship with each other.
...and Mr. Kasai...
...his father, Soichiro Akagi...
... Shoma Akagi ...
Tatsu-jiro Tagawa ...

What will happen to her when the smoke clears...?
...she asked herself these pressing questions...
As Detective Yuri held on to conscious-ness...
SWOOM
SWOOM

KASHOOM
KAAASHOOH
ガ ア ア ア


He probably wanted to get a hold of that tape when he tried to kill you.
Uncle Tatsu must have caught word of him selling you the informa-tion.
TUK
At the edge of Nichinan Seaside in Kyushu.
Kida was discovered dead in the water.


If we only had that tape, we could have stopped Tagawa.
I'm sorry, Mr. Akagi ...
Uncle Tatsu can breathe a sigh of relief.
Now Kida's dead, and that tape burned up in the car.


He's a weak man without a vision. Eventually he'll dig his own grave!
Hey, don't worry about it.
"F" Volume 15 THE END

F VOL.15

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